THE CONSTELLATIONAL DIASPORA: FILIPINO LITERATURE AND LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY IMPERIALISM

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This dissertation revolves around two questions: what kind of a politics can one imagine taking hold in the Filipino diaspora, and what place can literature occupy therein? These questions come from a primary set of concerns: firstly, the predominantly nationalistic and hierarchical tendencies of theories of the Filipino diaspora's potential politics; and secondly, the capacity for literature to engender political concepts, and what, then, the role of the reader plays as the receptor and creator of these concepts.

Accordingly, this dissertation is divided into two parts: a theoretical determination of the political categories that allow one to think the idea of a non-hierarchical diasporic politics, and a literary critical elaboration of these categories. In the first part, I engage a variety of texts, from theoretical works that deal with the concept of a revolutionary subjectivity, to historical and theoretical texts that address the issue of Filipino politics. The thesis I begin with is that the hierarchies that Filipino and Filipino American scholars and activists end up reproducing are directly related to the problems posed by the American return to the Philippines at the end of World War 2. The main problem is how democracy, as represented by the U.S. vis-à-vis fascism, is conceived. In the end, I conclude that democracy is, historically speaking, inextricable from American imperialism. This is why nationalism ends up creating hierarchies: because democracy is, in its alignment with Empire, also inextricable from the State, the implicit ally of nationalisms of all kinds.

I propose an alternative model: the constellational diaspora, in which the Philippines is included *in* the diaspora as a site for action, thus removing its centrality within any diasporic nationalism. One can encounter this constellationality, as I call it, in literature, which can operate a series of ideas through which the reader is able to imagine from a particular perspective the concept of a non-hierarchical politics. The figure that culminates this dissertation's political trajectory is a specific one, disavowing all Empires, nations, and States alike: the traitor as a general political category.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ryan Canlas was born in 1978, in Guam. The son of a Navy man and an accountant, he moved around a lot as a child: from the Philippines (where his sister was born), to Northern California, to Southern California, to Connecticut, and back to Southern California, where he lived throughout college, attending the University of California, Riverside and earning his B.A. in English in 2000. Taking a year off to work, he then moved to Ithaca, New York in 2001 to attend Cornell University's English Department, from which he received his Master's degree in 2005. He later moved to San Diego, California, where he completed his dissertation, successfully defending it in October 2007.

For everyone I love—*siyempre*.

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My committee, of course, has been invaluable; although my graduate career has been marked by a significant amount of intellectual independence, the endless amount of encouragement they have offered aided me when, at times, I began to feel as though my project made no sense to anyone but myself. As an audience, as readers of my work, the most important thing they have given me is this: a perspective from which to imagine the possibility that my work, in some way, matters. More specifically, however, their respective areas of expertise, their respective intellects, posed welcome challenges to my thinking.

Biodun Jeyifo, with his probing, and sometimes impossible to answer, questions concerning the deep alliances and rifts between the variety of philosophical, historical, and political sources of which I have made use for the six years he has known me has allowed me to see more clearly the stakes, especially to a militant politics, involved in that most subtle political weapon: language.

Natalie Melas, who always seemed excited about my work, has been the most generally engaged with my theoretical concerns. During the writing and completion of my dissertation, she has given my the confidence that a devastating critique of what seems like a universally cherished value—democracy—can indeed result from what otherwise seemed to be not only an untenable political decision, but a crazy challenge to everything people hold dear.

Finally, Shelley Wong's insistence that I pay attention to how I conceive of temporalities has been and remains indispensable; her suggestion that I should constantly be open to alternative modes of thinking the possibility of transformations, histories, and futures sheds light on that thing that should be most

important to a militant politics, but becomes increasingly difficult to sustain the more we become embroiled in the problems that confront us: hope.

And then there are those with whom my intellectual friendship is contoured by a different type of intimacy altogether. I made many friends in graduate school, most notably, Jade, Mike, Alex, and Ari. Not only are they intellectuals—as difficult as it is in a place as small as Ithaca (and for that reason alone they should be given some praise), they could also traverse the seemingly inevitable horizon of academic pretense and talk nonsense with me.

My friends in Southern California deserve special recognition. Among them, however, there is one upon whom I should take a step back and heap undo praise for the impetus she gave me in attempting a dissertation as ambitious as this. Margaret Fajardo, my friend since college, offered me what was probably the greatest advice on my dissertation: "Why don't you limit yourself to the second world war?" Without, perhaps, knowing my penchant for refusing limitations, this question opened up a vast array of possibilities. And for that alone I thank her.

Then there are my extended family, my brothers and sisters in their own right, most of whom I have known and loved since high school: Chris, Ivy, and little Nevaeh; Alvin, Helena, and little Austin; Nicky, Damian, and their micro-ninja Rafa; Pam, Bis, and their yet-to-be-born-ball-of-light Jasmine Alani; and Meriel and Joseph. They are the reason I stay in touch with reality—they, unknowingly, pull me down from that ivory tower and stomp on whatever ego I have—and they remind me that gaining a huge intellect can sometimes come at the price of losing your personality. Most people lose sight of this. This is their gift to me.

Now my family. I should reserve the most pithy statements for them—my love for them can only be elaborated in a space that even this dissertation's length

could not contain. My dad, Cesar: I am, I hope, indeed my father's son. Compassionate, tireless, ever-giving, a story-teller with an immovable will—were this indeed my present and future, I would be eternally thankful. My mom, Emma: a tremendously hard-headed and fearless woman, and also sentimental, sweet, and thoughtful beyond comprehension. I make no apologies for being a momma's boy. Most people say I look like the perfect combination of my parents. All I want is their courage. And my younger sister, Chrissy: the weirdest person I have ever met, and also one of the funniest. She remains loyal (despite the body slams) and loving. Little sisters are supposed to look up to their big brothers. I look up to her: her funniness is only matched by how ferocious she is. These, in my mind, are my family's most important contributions to me, both during graduate school and as a son and brother. Their support, then, has been relatively indirect. But, as in many cases, the most indirect things can also be the most-earth moving and powerful.

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INTRODUCTION

> ". . . there is no criterion for establishing a correspondence between aesthetic virtue and political virtue. There are only choices."
> ——Jacques Rancière, "The Janus-Face of Politicized Art"

The problem of nationalism besieges any thought on the politics of diaspora. In the case of the Philippines and the Filipino diaspora, this problem becomes especially pronounced: the language of the "homeland," even among second generation diasporic Filipinos, dominates the idea of the Philippines and its place in the transnational and planetary topology of Filipino identities. The political economy of contemporary capitalism helps keep this relationship stable: in 2005, remittances to the Philippines helped boost personal consumption, which was the largest contributor to GDP growth that year.[1] These remittances are mostly provided by overseas contract workers. Needless to say, they are the most easily exploitable form of labor: not only are they in constant supply (IMF and World Bank policies displacing workers from Philippines cities and its provinces all the time), they are also, not being legal citizens, not protected by the labor rights of their host countries. And yet, they make more money than Filipinos "at home" do. Again, the IMF and World Bank ensures this: the national currency, the *peso*, is devalued, tariff ratios are imbalanced, national industries are deregulated and privatized, land is enclosed, etc. The continual exploitation and surplus value extraction, the key components to Marx's formula for capitalist accumulation, keep the political economy of the Philippines, under capitalism, *stable*—that is, stable *and poor*. The flow of money is only the

[1] Asia Development Bank. "Asian Development Outlook 2006: II. Economic Trends and Prospects in Developing Asia: Southeast Asia: Philippines." http://www.adb.org/Documents/Books/ADO/2006/phi.asp (2007).

concrete manifestation of the nation's central role in the diasporic topology, one contoured by capitalism.

This dissertation formulates a series of answers to the following question: does this political economic foundation of the Filipino diaspora mean that any thought on the diaspora's political possibilities would have to adopt—to *accept*—the limitations imposed upon it by capital? If indeed the brief overview given above of the bases of the diaspora's constitution is correct, and that any kind of diasporic nationalism has its roots in contemporary capitalism's political economic effects on the Philippines, does this mean that any nationalism—which is to say, any diasporic politics that grounds itself in the Philippines *first* as the originary site for the constitution of its political ontology—is doomed from the start *because it merely accepts the terms that have been set for it by what this nationalism aims to counteract: the destructive effects of capitalism?* It is a question about the possibilities of thinking against and beyond the horizons of capitalism, a question that also seeks just what these horizons are in the first place.

My answer is definitive: the horizon of any diasporic nationalism, a diasporic politics that, because it has to maintain a single nation as its primary source for and object of its political energies (in this case, the Philippines), is essentially hierarchical, is *the State*, and concurrently, *capitalism and imperialism*. And yes, I will show that it is possible to think beyond these horizons, and specifically from the perspective that a particular medium can afford the subject: *literature*. In literature, the reader can encounter the means by which these horizons can be surpassed; literature allows the reader to think these possibilities into existence, and in so doing enables the reader's thought on his or her own subjectivity through the new political dimensions the narrative has disclosed.

I. Methodology: Political Ontologies

What do I mean when I say that the horizon for any diasporic nationalism, of which the Filipino diaspora is a particularly acute instance, will always be the State, capitalism, and imperialism? That the hierarchies that compel a diasporic Filipino to identify *first* with the Philippines as "home," regardless of how far removed he or she may be (first or second generation, overseas contract worker, etc.), is a way of identifying *as a Filipino* without submitting the identity of the Filipino, *delimited by the nation*, to the kind of critique it deserves. As a consequence, the stakes in aligning an identity, a political identity no less, with the nation remain beyond the scope of rigorous examination. This is important because the formation of the Philippine nation is inseperable from its formation as a *State*—as a political economic unit that, as scholars have repeatedly emphasized, has been from its inception plagued by corruption and exploitation, a State that, moreover, is unthinkable without taking into consideration its allegiance to American imperialism and the ever-widening and penetrating grasp of late twentieth century capitalism.

The Filipino, as an ethno-political signifier, was born from the *ilustrado* appropriation of the Spanish designator of a "naturalized" Spanish-born individual living in the Philippines. At the turn of the twentieth-century, with the rebellion against the Spanish gaining strength, the *ilustrado* class (those educated elite of which national hero Jose Rizal was a "member") took the name for themselves, seeking to ignite a sense of radical anti-colonial nationalism among those "native" to the Philippines, those who identified *against* the Spanish *conquistadores*. The unification of the Philippines *as a nation*, however, did not take place *until the Americans arrived*: it was only until they set up what was nonetheless a very differentiated form of rule (military in the provinces, political economic in the metropolitan centers) that the idea of the Philippine nation took hold. The very name

"Filipino," then, will always be marked by the problem of separating the idea of a unified ethno-political ontology from what is nonetheless its historical progenitor: American imperialism. I will show more elaborately, in Chapter 1, how this political ontology operates in the diaspora.

But is it possible to completely and successfully struggle against this historical trap? If I am claiming that indeed it is, however, I do so only by basing my claims upon the histories that are already there. I argue against this history; what I do not do is argue a way to think *outside* of it altogether.

In this way, Alain Badiou's theories of a subtractive ontology are particularly helpful. For him, a political ontology—a *militant* ontology, a properly political subject capable of *separating* itself from the status quo and thus challenging it—can only be constituted by a subtraction from any given socio-political situation. This subtraction involves an event, the rupture of the status quo and consensual fabric of the social, from which the subject can then arise. It bears keeping in mind that a militant ontology does not *produce* what Badiou calls the evental site; it is what emerges *from* it by following the consequences that ensue from that rupture. It is from Badiou that I derive two key notions for thinking the potential militancy of the Filipino diaspora:

1. The idea that the subject arises from an evental site, which itself arises *from the status quo*. The subject can *negate* the status quo only because it is able to think beyond it—*but from within the terms that it imposes upon thought*. This, ultimately, is the constitutive tension of a militant ontology: that it introduces new ways of thinking into the status quo—that is, it does not completely negate the terms set forth by it, but negates their significance and destroys their efficacy by *including them in an entirely new sequence*. This sequence can involve a new way of combining lines and figures (as was the case in cubism), or colors (as in Malevich's

revolutionary painting *White on White*), two of Badiou's favorite examples of an artistic event; or it can involve a political sequence, like that initiated by the October Revolution, in which a new proletarian subject came into view. In all cases, the militant subject arises as a potential figure whose concrete manifestation happens *as a process*, not as a result. What matters is not just that the State ended up swallowing the communism that resulted from the October revolution; what also matters is that the event took place, that it initiated the possibility of actualizing what was before then considered impossible: the creation, on a massive scale, of the idea of a proletarian society. Newness does not arise from nothing; *newness arises by introducing what is unrecognizable or impossible into what is already there, reinscribing the terms of the status quo into a new socio-political logic*.

2. That the *method* of determining the contours of an event is, despite the impossibility of creating that event, possible. *Thinking the possibility of the event is to participate in the event's potentiality.* The event, by being theorized, is potentiated. The method that declares the existence of events, that introduces into thought the idea that the status quo can be challenged and thenceforth arise a new militant subject, is the *intellectual threshold* of an event. It is a form of thought that is thus political and militant to the core.

I will address each of these topics in their turns.

That the subject can negate the status quo only from within its horizons is a crucial factor in constituting a militant Filipino ontology for the following reason: the *name Filipino itself designates, simultaneously, both the horizons of nationalism, and thus the State, and resistance to it.* If an anti-imperial and anti-capitalist politics is possible in the diaspora, it is only because the name Filipino, as the marker of an ontology, as the ethno-political designator of a given subject who identifies *as Filipino*, can serve to unify a political community against capital and empire by

introducing the negativity that this politics declares into the concept of the Filipino itself. The Filipino as militant ontology induces a *separation in the idea of Filipino-ness, which can only ever name the historically-conditioned problem mentioned earlier: that of the Filipino's rootedness in a State politics inseparable from American imperialism*. This is the tension constitutive of a subtractive politics.

But we encounter a problem, one that readers of Badiou have already likely identified: that of particularism. Badiou vilifies particularisms of all sorts, and instead opts for a universalism based upon the Truth, as he calls it, whose advent the event is: the Truth of a militant political upheaval of the status quo. This kind of universalism, *formally speaking*, is something I do not have a problem with. Talking about the Filipino, however, as a specific diasporic community, seems to run aground when we consider this aspect of the militant sequence, one that is so fundamental to Badiou's philosophy that failing to acknowledge this apparent problem is enough to make my claims irrelevant.

Inasmuch as my thought on the politics of the name draws direct inspiration from his political ontology, however, the diasporic politics I advocate herein points the way towards the dissolution of the particularism that, in a way, necessarily hampers it. This project, this dissertation, is nothing if not an attempt to think the extreme case of a situation within imperialism that, as a limit-case, must be traversed in order to realize the end of empire and capital. The particularity of a Filipino diasporic politics is only a preliminary step in the path towards destroying the particularity of the movement itself so as to bring about a general insurrection. This is the militant thrust of the ontology I will advance as well as the polemic of which its presentation consists.

Therein also lies the most important component of the tension constitutive of this subtractive ontology: that the Filipino, historically speaking, as an identity

constituted by a State and an empire, *negates its own foundations, affirming and outright denying them at the same time*. It is an ontology in constant erosion, a particularity that recognizes the situation thusly: as an instance of what is nonetheless a much more general function of capitalism—its extraction of surplus value from the poorest of the world.

It is in this way that thinking the possibility of a new political ontology means participating in its creation. Producing a method that thinks how a subject can think its emergence against the horizons of the State and empire, thinking one's subtraction from their limitations, are already intellectual efforts of the greatest difficulty. What Badiou's method does, what my own, which is only a humble reinterpretation and extension of his, seeks to do, is this: *to think militantly, to theorize what a properly militant thought does.* This is a theory, moreover, that strives to attain militant thought in the situation proper to it. To put it bluntly, and rather clumsily, it is a theory that theorizes what a militant theory consists of, what it does and what it allows the theorist to think. In my case, the intellectual situation is specific: to theorize what it would mean to think militantly from within the relative confines of literary study and scholarship. My objective is to demonstrate the possibility of thinking a non-hierarchical political ontology of the Filipino diaspora— through literature. This dissertation, then, is an instance of militant Filipino diasporic literary criticism.

II. Literature and Nationalism

I therefore have a particular subject in mind, whose potential militancy I will elaborate: that of the reader. My concern with literature has to do with what is today perhaps an under-theorized component: the reading process. The question that

animates this dissertation is the following: what concepts can literature produce for the reader, and what happens—what can happen—when the reader reads? What can literature do for thought? To be more specific: what kind of a thought is literature?

Accordingly, my theoretical investigations revolve around the extension of what is now, in academia, a largely ignored field of inquiry: reader response theory. Developed from the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, the importance I accord to this literary theoretical "school" has everything to do with the rather simple but, for reasons that surely have to do with the apparently outmoded philosophical tradition that gives it its pulse (phenomenology), ignored relationship between two things: the subjectivity of the reader and the materiality of the text. Inasmuch as I am focused on looking at how a militant diasporic subject can potentially be constituted, I do not see how I could avoid tackling reader response theory and its attendant problems, creating, in the process, a new consideration of the theory so that, apropos of the non-hierarchical ontology of which I gave an indication earlier, the reader-text relation is not beset by what I see as the subordination of the relation to a pre-given idea of "reality." This reality, I will show, is tantamount to the social and political status quo. The stakes in my rereading of reader response theory are high: it means nothing less than figuring out a way of how literature can create a thought of the *illegitimacy* of the status quo. Consequently, this also means that literature can potentially present the idea of its undermining, a potentiality that I will demonstrate through my reading of Jacques Rancière's own reading of literature's capacity to express relations of social equality.

What does this have to do with diasporic politics? Essentially, I am concerned with looking at how representing *the nation* could invoke the idea of a politics that nonetheless *refuses* the nation as the legitimator of a political ontology. In Filipino and Filipino American criticism, this refusal is absent; indeed, even the

most radical of critiques maintains the nation as a central (if not indeed problematic) component of a Filipino politics.

One such critique is Caroline Hau's aptly entitled *Necessary Fictions*. In this book, she discusses the "affinity between literature and nationalism," an argument she makes "on the basis of a common fund of ideas and concerns dealing with the possibility and necessity of social change." This common fund of ideas between literature and nationalism is premised upon their "intimate connection" "through the notion of 'excess,' a term that [she uses] to refer to the heterogeneous elements—'the people,' 'the indigenous,' 'the Chinese,' 'the political,' 'and 'error'—that inform, but also exceed, nationalist attempts to grasp, intellectually and politically, the complex realities at work in Philippine society."[2] These excesses, Hau explains, serve to designate those elements that cannot be completely subsumed under the national project without some violence (both conceptual and physical), a series of irreconcilable differences that point to the persistence of the historical limitations that prevent a homogeneous national project. These excesses are thus both failures of the national project and indications of the imbrication of the Filipinos' political capacities with the historical circumstances in and through which they act. This is what Hau calls the Filipinos' "implication in a world . . . both of [their] making and not of [their] making."[3] It is to Hau's credit that she makes the central argument of her book by looking at how such contingencies make it impossible to see the various nationalisms in the Philippines' past as thoroughly viable projects. Indeed, her critique of the Communist Party of the Philippines' basically Statist and limited politics remains an indelible instance of truly radical critique. I do, however, feel compelled to offer up my own caveat: if indeed the limitations that confront a

[2] Caroline S. Hau, *Necessary Fictions: Philippine Literature and the Nation, 1946 – 1980* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000), 6.
[3] *ibid*, 7.

Filipino politics forces the critique to acknowledge include the concept of failure into her theorization of its possibilities, why cannot the nation itself *be submitted to critique, that it cannot be conceived as an historically-determined limitation in itself*?

It is at this point where I will begin my own investigations. The premise of my dissertation is that the relationship between literature and politics lies in the former's ability to give rise to a thought on the latter as a power that *exceeds the limitation that is the nation, and that the constitutive tension of a diasporic politics is that it acknowledges the imperative to supercede the nation, which nonetheless continues to exercise its aggressive hold on the political imagination*. Literature lets the reader think this constitutive tension of politics, thus giving rise to a kind of political imagination of the Filipino diaspora.

I will call the emergence of this constitutive tension, as concept, the emergence of the possibility of thinking *the absolute negativity* that a Filipino diasporic politics operates: absolute because it is the total limit of such a politics, whose *modus operandi* is to destroy the nation as an organizer of political ontology, and negative because this destruction is the constitutive void of a diasporic politics. If the Filipino names, within the horizons of the nation, the collusion of State politics and imperial conquest, then the impossible task of this dissertation is to determine how it is nevertheless possible to think, through literature, of the Filipino's irreducibility to the Philippines and thus to nationalism.

III. A Note on Organization

It should be quite obvious by now that I am making some rather polemical claims. The diasporic politics I advance herein is the limit-case of a Filipino subjectivity, in that what the latter entails is an intensification of the historical

tensions that many scholars of the Philippines (both literary critical and otherwise) largely ignore. This tension has everything to do with the name "Filipino," which, in what follows, I will stretch to its breaking point, close to those regions beyond which it would cease to exist, only to pull it back and argue for its necessity, against its total abolition. This is the only way to catch glimpses of that negativity that is so radical so as to found a properly militant ontology.

The organization of this dissertation, then, proceeds according to a series of hypotheses, followed by a series of logical derivations that elaborate on the implications of these hypotheses as they develop into new ones altogether. This is what Badiou, in *Being and Event*, describes as the capacity of the subject, who "uses names to make hypotheses about the truth" (and by truth he means, as I have already said, that new sequence of elements and coordinates that issues from an event, the fidelity to which is a procedure accomplished by militants).[4] The subject can only hazard a guess at what the event has initiated; he or she makes hypotheses about the proper way of advancing the event by designating its subsequent elements, by naming them as in so doing introducing them into the field of the political and the concrete. Herein lies the paradox of Badiou's ontology: that these names must bear the burden of the status quo, inasmuch as they can be made to mean anything at all, and yet do so only in the service of what the event does, of its overturning of the status quo. It is this political and ontological tension that, for me, the name "Filipino" actualizes: the easily recognizable identity that erodes the foundations of that identity, the name of a national subject-hood that can also name the erosion of that subject-hood's primacy. This is all, in my estimation, a diasporic politics can do at the moment. But it is already quite a departure from everything we have thought possible thus far.

[4] Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* (Tr. Oliver Feltham, New York: Continuum, 2005), 399.

Chapter 1 will thus begin with an exposition of these historical and theoretical tensions, moving towards a topology of the name Filipino and its consequences for thinking a non-hierarchical diasporic politics.

Chapter 2 will proceed from these propositions by looking at the topology from the perspective of time: if indeed a non-hierarchical diasporic politics is the *beginning* of a Filipino ontology, then this means we have to start with the paradoxical position of presupposing a non-existent situation, i.e. the dissolution of the State and empire as the legitimators of a Filipino national identity. What does it mean to posit this dissolution, which is the goal of such an ontology, as its foundation? It means, as I will show, abandoning a linear model of time in favor of a much more complex and variegated relationship between past, present, and future.

Chapter 3 will accordingly concretize this temporal re-evaluation. My concern in this dissertation is with how the current problem of diasporic politics has been conditioned by the problem of World War II. How are we to think the Americans' return to the Philippines? As saviors? As dominators? How do we think both without also in some ways de-legitimizing its defeat of Japanese fascism? The problem is that the binary between democracy, as an ultimate Good, and fascism, as an incontestable Evil, can be seen today in the way that democracy, as a concept and practice, has been subsumed under the operations of empire and capital through a single name: neoliberalism. It is because of this subsumption that, I will argue, we need a new concept of democracy that, in many ways, demand that, if a truly non-hierarchical diasporic politics is to be thought, is also *non-democratic*.

Chapter 4 will act as the transition chapter between the theoretical and political arguments and the literary theoretical analyses. It can therefore be read as the putative divider between both parts of this dissertation, the threshold between two separate but interrelated fields of inquiry. It is in the chapter where I will develop a

new reading of reader response theory and the constitution of the political subjectivity of the reader.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 will each be devoted to a reading of a specific novel. Respectively, they are F. Sionil Jose's *Viajero*, Carlos Bulosan's *All the Conspirators*, and Wilfrido Nolledo's *But for the Lovers*. I will show how each of them either inhibits the concept of a non-hierarchical diasporic politics (*Viajero*), critiques nationalism through the coordinates of novelistic irony (*All the Conspirators*), and proposes a genuinely militant figure that disavows the nation as the horizon of being: the traitor (*But for the Lovers*). These chapters proceed as a gradual elaboration of how literature can potentially induce the kind of thought that I develop in the first three chapters. Literature, in this sense, is not an *illustration* of the theoretical and political concepts proposed therein; rather, they are a *concrete instance* of their actualization in thought, what I term a *variable operator* of the thought on a non-hierarchical diasporic politics.

Finally, the Conclusion will take into account the stakes of the dissertation as a whole, and end with a rumination on its relevance to the current geopolitical situation we all face, this war-ridden twenty-first century.

CHAPTER 1
A MILITANT TOPOLOGY OF THE NAME: THE "FILIPINO"

> ". . . politics stakes its existence on its capacity to establish a relation to . . . the void."
> ——Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*

Let us advance, at the outset, this rather extreme thesis: that the name "Filipino" will always designate a political ontology aligned with imperialism. And let us advance, in conjunction with this thesis, another: that this political ontology is also thusly aligned with the State. No amount of radicalism heaped upon any Filipino or Filipino diasporic politics, by virtue of its name alone, can escape this trap. That this ineluctable imperialism and Statism bores its way relentlessly into this political ontology rests upon a single thing: the similarly ineluctable problem of how to conceive of the place that the Philippine *nation* occupies in any thought on a Filipino political ontology, especially a *diasporic* political ontology.

There is a decidedly popular notion among Filipino and Filipino American radicals and leftists that some form of revolutionary nationalism, in the service of an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist politics, is required of any genuinely militant Filipino ontology. Indeed, Philippine history has been witness to a number of nationalist movements, from the *ilustrado* appropriation of the name Filipino to designate a new political subjectivity wrested from its Spanish roots; to the communist HUKBALAHAP campaigns during the second world war and in the years immediately following; to the People's Power Revolution against the corrupt regime of Ferdinand Marcos; and to the recent mass demonstrations against both current president Gloria Macapagcal-Arroyo and the nearly uncountable human

rights violations committed by military and paramilitary troops against activists, militants, and community leaders accused of suspicious anti-State activity.

The question, however, is whether nationalism is still (or has ever been) a viable conceptual framework for any thought or action definable as militant or radical. It is a question that plagues political theorization itself, and revolves around the logical and very real separation that the State represents as the political formalization of the collectivity designated by the term "nation." When submitted to the conceptual parameters that contour this dissertation, this problem acquires an entirely new valence, for the problem of the diaspora is the problem not of the originary State or nation, but, by virtue of the diaspora's obviously international scope, of States and of nations in general as well. The global representation of the nation vis-à-vis the State becomes a problem of imperial representation, of the representation of the State under the conditions of Empire.

To what extent, then, is the nation logically separable from the State and its coercive and repressive machines? It seems that any diasporic politics that resorts to a form of nationalism must necessarily hierarchize the relation between one subjectivating site and another: that of the nation or locality in which the diasporic individual resides and works to the Philippines. Even if we posit a very real separation between the State and the nation (a move compelled by a desire for the conditions of true equality, to be sure), a diasporic nationalism still introduces a relation of inequality. Is the nation, conceived through this diasporic politics, a mere product of the logic that the imperial space imposes upon a diasporic subjectivity that in its turn thinks this nationalism as a viable solution?

Take, for example, the following proposal for a Filipino American radical politics. Let it stand as exemplary of the kind of nationalism I have been thus far describing:

> We Filipinos [in the U.S.] don't have any real identification of ourselves as belonging to a nation because that nation of all the classes and sectors in the Philippines is non-existent; that organic embodiment of the national-popular will has not yet come into being, and has in fact been aborted and suppressed by U.S. military power when it was being born during the revolution of 1896 – 1898, a culmination of three centuries of revolts against Spanish rule. We don't have a popular-democratic nation to serve as the matrix and locus of authentic sharing and belonging—that nation is still emerging, a manifold complex of antagonisms and struggles still in the agony of unfolding.[1]

This proposal is advanced by E. San Juan, Jr., probably the most caustic and astute Filipino critic of empire working today in the U.S. Although his synthesis of Marxist theory and cultural studies in his analyses of capitalism and Filipino and American politics have innovated theorizations of a diasporic anti-capitalism, San Juan is himself unable to shake nationalism as even a provisional step towards political action amongst Filipinos in the U.S. This inability to think past and beyond nationalism, however radical it is defined, transforms political identification into the process of creating a sense of nation-hood that will serve as the groundwork for a political subjectivity capable of resisting, in collective fashion, imperialism and capitalism from inside the country (the U.S.) that violently enforces and polices the global political economic status quo.

The sense of loss in this passage is palpable; accompanying this need for a national political ground is the idea that a revolution capable of actualizing this ground has been crushed.

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[1] Epifanio San Juan, Jr., "The Predicament of Filipinos in the United States: 'Where Are You From? When Are You Going Back?'," *The State of Asian America: Activism and Resistance in the 1990s* (Ed. Karin Aguilar-San Juan, Boston: South End, 1994), 215.

Implicit in this kind of a politics is the aforementioned split between the Philippine State and the nation, the former the product, result, and eventual accomplice of U.S. imperialism and the latter the embodiment of a revolutionary popular "will" against both imperial exploitation and violence and domestic governmental corruption. The obvious, however, is worth mentioning: that a diasporic politics founded upon such a national popular will requires positing a "return" to the Philippines. It necessitates an international hierarchy within which the Philippines, as the site of national popular will, conveys political meaning and legitimacy to any radical, anti-imperialist, and anti-capitalist politics. The hierarchies that this popular nationalism aims to attack on a *local* level—that is, on the level of the Philippines as the State that arose on the corpse of an aborted revolution—reemerge on an *international* level, the level proper to a diasporic politics.

In conjunction with the two theses I proposed at the beginning of this discussion, I should at this point advance yet another: that this international reckoning of hierarchies predisposes a national popular diasporic politics to a politics whose *form* is indistinguishable from the State and, as a consequence, from Empire as well.

This chapter will demonstrate not only this sad and inexorable fate of much of today's Filipino diasporic politics; it will also demonstrate the possibility of thinking another diasporic politics altogether, one which is explicitly non-hierarchical and which assumes, *as the basis for its ontology*, the problem that "being Filipino" designates: the problem of its indistinguishability from the political ontology that the State and empire *allow*.

These can be elaborated by a series of conceptual propositions:

1. A diasporic *nationalism* will always reproduce the logic of the State and Empire, a logic that produces what I will term the *axiomatic* identity of the politicized Filipino.
2. For a genuinely militant diasporic ontology to emerge, it is necessary to think *through this axiomatic, an inescapable fact of this militancy's operation*. Rather than abandoning the axiomatic as a mere fiction of power, it is actually and paradoxically thinkable as an indispensable and constitutive element of an ontology that is, nonetheless, non-hierarchical.
3. The name "Filipino" harbors this inescapability, but inasmuch as it does so it also enables a militant ontology that, as the subjectivity constitutive of a non-hierarchical politics, produces what I will call the *absolute negativity* of the logics of the State and Empire, of the axiomatic identity that they always force the subject to adopt.

I will address and clarify these propositions in their turns.

1.1 Against the State, Against the Nation

A. Dictatorship and Centralism

Diasporic nationalism must confront the problem of hegemony that it implicitly adopts as its essence. Hegemony, as we will see, is the obverse of the non-hierarchical militancy whose concept I will be advancing in the closing sections of this chapter. Our analysis of the contours of hegemony will not only reveal the failings of diasporic nationalism; it will also reveal the ways in which what I have termed the absolute negativity of a militant ontology are rendered passive and unintelligible.

In the case of the Philippines, the most explicit definition of revolutionary nationalism can be found in the Communist Party of the Philippines-Maoist's (CPP-Maoist's) "Programme for a People's Democratic Revolution in the Philippines." Written in 1968, it remains, to this day, the party program, unrevised and unappended. Section II.2, entitled "Establish a People's Democratic State and a Coalition or United Front Government," states that "[t]he people's democratic state is under the leadership of the working class and it includes participation of all democratic classes, i.e., the workers, peasants, petty bourgeoisie, and the national bourgeoisie." Section II.4, entitled "Follow the Principle of Democratic Centralism," states that "[t]he national government shall have central authority over the local government at various levels. The national government, however, shall base its decisions on the needs and aspirations of the broad masses of the people and the lowers levels of government. This is centralized leadership based on democracy and democracy guided by centralized leadership. At every level of the government (barrio, municipality, city or district, provincial, regional), there shall be elected representative bodies where decisions are taken democratically for every corresponding area. A lower representative body shall be subordinate to a higher representative body. Any part of the government shall be subordinate to the People's Revolutionary Congress which represents nationally the sovereign Filipino people."[2] Is this idea of the nation, defined as democratic and, inasmuch as the State in its current manifestation is definable as an appendage to Empire, anti-Statist, commensurable to the nation imagined diasporically as the source of a national popular will?

[2] CPP-Maoist, "Programme for a People's Democratic Revolution in the Philippines," *Communism in the Philippines: An Introduction* (Ed. Alfredo B. Saulo. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1990), 201.

San Juan, as we can see from the passage I quoted above, does not elaborate on what this will might look like, but we can surmise that it bears some resemblance to that of the CPP-Maoist version of a revolutionary democracy. By no means, however, am I making a simple and blatantly gratuitous conflation; the logic that supports the conjunction of the national and the popular is in every way dominated by the idea that maintains the CPP-Maoist construction of a united front government: hegemony. Let us venture, then, the qualitative aspects of the national popular by way of the Communist Party's elaboration of a revolutionary organization—which in the end amounts to the organization of *consensus*.

At first glance, the CPP-Maoist's principle of "democratic centralism" sounds a lot like what is arguably the most powerful formulation thus far provided of what revolutionary democracy means: Lenin's notion of the revolutionary State, which embodies the dissolution of all power under the name of proletarian dictatorship. For Lenin, the paradox of a proletarian dictatorship is a virtual impossibility; the oxymoronic naming of this form of government designates the State's necessary dissolution at the point of its inception. But this dissolution, as the founding moment of the State, can take place only insofar as this State is a specific, and again, paradoxical kind: a *non-democratic* State. Of course, there is no space to discuss, in full, the implications of Lenin's conceptualization of the State's infamous "withering away." It will simply suffice, for the present, to recall his description of democracy as the "best possible political shell for capitalism."[3] Recall that Lenin also says that "democracy is *not* identical with the subordination of the minority to the majority. Democracy is a *state* which recognizes the subordination of the minority to the majority, i.e., an organisation for the systematic

[3] V.I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, *Selected Works Vol. II* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 247.

use of *force* by one class against another."[4] Lenin thus posits the existence, albeit negatively, of a form of democracy that can be thought separately from domination and repression; he pits this apparently egalitarian social topology against the topology of the democratic state, which *recognizes* and *organizes* non-egalitarian relations, but always (and this is the State democracy that Lenin is describing) *under the form of equality*. Lenin says as much when he describes democracy as "formal equality," as opposed to the "actual" equality of a truly communist and non-Statist communism.[5]

What, then, is the difference between this notion of democracy vis-à-vis the State and the CPP-Maoist's call for "democratic centralism"? Whereas Lenin advocated a proletarian dictatorship, and pushed the contradictions of this formal unity to the point of rupture, the CPP-Maoist advocates something else altogether: a *hegemonic* alliance between "all democratic classes." The difference is profound. Lenin's positing of a rupture qua democracy's implementation meant that its social and political *form* had to be challenged and ultimately destroyed if capitalism were to be truly abolished. The CPP-Maoist, however, keeps this form intact and uses it as the foundation for establishing, by way of democratic centralism, "a sovereign Filipino people." The contradictions that besiege Lenin's concept of democracy are not present in that of the CPP-Maoist: for them, democratic centralism is a deliberative organization that maintains the *form* of capitalist democracies as a necessarily transitional phase in the passage to a non-capitalist Philippine society. We will see in the next chapter to what degree this notion of transition, as opposed to rupture, inhibits any thought on a militant diasporic topology. For now, however, we will concern ourselves with the formal qualities of this version of

[4] *ibid*, 297.
[5] *ibid*, 310 – 11.

democracy. despite its claim to radicalism and its gestures towards revolution, it is actually based upon the *redistribution of the terms that comprise the status quo*. This formal problem is nothing if not the limit that comprises the concept of *antagonism* that lies at the heart of hegemony. And it is in this hegemonic relation, moreover, where we will begin to catch glimpses of the power of the absolute negativity of a militant politics.

B. Hegemony, Radical Democracy, and The Status Quo

The most radical re-conceptualization of hegemony in recent years has been that of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe in their *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. Their primary target in this book is mainstream Marxism and its primary theoreticians, whom they see as having closed off the radical democratic principles that Marxism, as an essentially socio-political philosophy with an illustrious ancestry dating back to the French Revolution, inherits. Their thesis is that Marxism's over-emphasis on "class" has reduced these radical principles to the logic of identitarianism, thus hierarchization the radical democratic potential of its theoretical and philosophical foundations. Their response to these reductions, however, actually ends up resuscitating an identitarianism of another kind: *the identity of the form that a radical politics must, in their estimation, take.* Here, in this identitarianism, we will begin to see the problems that hegemony imposes upon theorization of the Filipino diaspora's political ontology.

Laclau and Mouffe make the claim that society is resolutely contingent, with no positivity of its own. Contingency precludes fixing a particular identity (race, gender, class, sexuality, etc.) as *the* defining political subject—but only inasmuch as the absolute non-fixity of identities is precluded as well (since it would itself, as a topology, arise as the definitive form). Laclau and Mouffe reject every shred of

stability, even the stability of instability, so to speak; every individual, group formation, and social relation becomes "partially fixed." This collection of impossible closures allows society—radical society—to deconstruct itself. For Laclau and Mouffe, a hegemonic relation, qualified as a radical democratic society, consists of the emergence of a series of identities through which a political procedure defines itself and under which it unites (e.g., a politics defined primarily by anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-capitalist, etc. struggle). But this politics is democratic only insofar as it is characterized by the differential subjectivities not properly included in that unifying identity and which, as such, subvert its authority. They call these subversive subjectivities "elements" of a hegemonic project. They are the subjectivities that are constantly being excluded for the purposes of forming a provisional and contingent identity—the "naming" of the project under the terms of the unifying subjectivity—and which are in their turns constantly erupting, asserting their own claims and their own objectives, regrounding the terms of the project.[6] These elements reshape the latter based upon the discord they induce.[7] The topology of a hegemonic relation, conceived as the basis for a radical democracy, thus consists of structuring discord according to the unifying identity's ever-provisional ability to regulate action.

The key to this relation is therefore the excluded element's persistent intrusion into the project, its ability to change the internal composition of the hegemonic relation. This exteriority, in addition to the excess it represents, is also protean: its metamorphoses conform to the internal composition, which incorporates certain elements ("articulates" them, in Laclau and Mouffe's terminology) and turns them into "moments," terms that are defined by and

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[6] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (2nd ed. New York: Verso, 2001), 105.
[7] *ibid*, 111 – 13.

definable within the hegemonic composition's discursive field.[8] It is a politics of uninterrupted antagonism; as Laclau and Mouffe say, the transformation of elements into moments, the incorporation and assimilation of every excluded subjectivity and claim, is always unsuccessful and "incomplete."[9] The hegemonic topology is contoured by the constant shuttling of elements and moments in and out of the relation. This passage, in which every element's self-identicalness, as it were, is constantly being punctured by the excesses that the relation cannot contain, *is* the realization of democratic politics. Every element is capable of being accommodated by the tensile strength of the internal weave of hegemony. Their disruptions, as they lie on the outskirts of the hegemonic relation's boundaries, are excesses that hegemony, as a political and social *form*, will always be able to define once it comes time for them to redefine the *substance* of the struggle.

But this is exactly the problem. The elements are capable of reshuffling the hegemonic discourse, but they cannot transform its overall composition; though the substantive dimensions of the relation may change, the *logic* that governs the ways in which political subjectivities are *defined as being combinable and recombinable* persists. This is why the French Revolution is such an important event for Laclau and Mouffe; it represents the egalitarian potential that a century of Marxism has buried under the banner of the proletariat: namely, the Revolution's "decisive mutation in the political imaginary of Western societies" as it toppled the *ancien régime* and subordinated society to the "logic of equivalence."[10] A radical democratic politics pluralizes and democratizes this immanent social mutation, one based upon what they call the "struggle for a maximum autonomization of spheres,"

[8] *ibid*, 105.
[9] *ibid*, 107.
[10] *ibid*, 155.

a "pluralism" based upon the "autoconstitutivity" of each element.[11] The excluded element, under the force of this pluralism, precipitates its autonomy *as* an excluded thing; it initiates a radical politics that does not *negate* the *general form* of society but *expands* its de-positivized sites, planting into the field a series of autonomous regions around which any and all transcendental principles fall apart.

In what way, then, is Laclau and Mouffe's notion of excess and exclusion thinkable as negativities? Equivalence subverts identity and reveals difference to be a constitutive principle, yet inasmuch as equivalence places a ban on every positivity, including difference ("the differential positivity of all terms" in the relation), it also reveals the latter as a "precarious" political category. This dual "subversion" gives "a real existence to negativity as such." Laclau and Mouffe describe this as the "formula of antagonism."[12] The element, the excluded thing, arises as an indirect negativity whose realness consists of its effects, of the impossibility it introduces into the hegemonic topology: that of every positivity, whether it be that of identity or difference.

We can see that negativity is the theoretico-political linchpin for Laclau and Mouffe's topology. Drawing this negativity forth and making it the central principle not only keeps society from "suturing" itself (in Laclau and Mouffe's terms); it also keeps it from devolving into a state of absolute chaos. The excluded element thus takes on an added complexity. Not only is it capable of gaining entry into the hegemonization and initiating a recomposition of its terms; it also arises as an indirect presence, *refracted* by the moment that it becomes upon entry. The excluded is incapable of making *its* claims known unless it becomes a partial moment, unless it accepts the discursive "rules" of the topology into which it seeks

[11] *ibid*, 167.
[12] *ibid*, 128 – 9.

and gains access. What is excluded and delegitimated, *as such*, is that which is unknowable within the hegemonic relation.

At this point, we should pause and reflect upon this, for this relation between what is excluded and what is included, between the unknowable and its transformation into an intelligible component of a political relation, is key to the concerns of this dissertation. The perpetually excluded thing—which is thus perennially unknowable within the discursive terrain of a given political form—is what I have referred to (and which I will henceforth be summoning as this dissertation's guiding concept) as *absolute negativity*—negative because it is the excess that politics cannot—and must not—admit, and absolute because *as such* it remains unknowable except as a refraction of itself, absolute because in itself it is entirely inadmissible.

Rather than exploiting the radically excessive domain of absolute negativity, however, Laclau and Mouffe turn it into a *regulator* of hegemony; it becomes the organizing principle by which the discursive field of society, functioning as the *formally antagonistic relation* that grounds radical democracy, is able to persist. Inasmuch as negativity anchors the antagonisms constitutive of a latent democratic imaginary, it belongs *to* the social: it is made significant because it is said to inform the logic of contingency. Negativity, vis-à-vis this discursivity, mutates into a *self-evident* thing. Consequently, politics, the social topology within which a radical democracy realizes itself, becomes a politics that organizes the status quo: *hegemony posits an ontology of antagonism as the horizon for politics, beyond which no intelligible and legitimate politics can exist. Antagonism, moreover, posits a completely enclosed ontology.* Because the excluded is allowed entry into the discursive field as a refraction of itself, politics, defined qua this discourse, is a

terrain within which antagonism *becomes identical to itself*. This is the only way that Laclau's and Mouffe's moments can work: by speaking to each other.

There is no rupture in Laclau and Mouffe's topology, if by rupture we mean a break in the *form* that politics, in order to be legitimate, must take. There is no de-structuring of political ontologies in Laclau and Mouffe, only the constant redistribution and recombination of the terms that are said to comprise the immanence that is radical democratic politics. Slavoj Zizek's critique of Laclau and Mouffe on this point is accurate: "the real danger, the temptation to be resisted, is the very notion of a radical cut by means of which the basic social antagonism will be dissolved and the new era of a self-transparent nonalienated society will arrive."[13] Although Zizek's notion of a self-transparent society does not in itself follow as a logical consequence of the cut, his principal criticism is solid. Laclau and Mouffe are haunted by Marxism's failure, which paradoxically forces them to *fix* the ontology of the social *as* antagonism. Beyond the status quo, absolute negativity—*as such*—remains unintelligible and untheorizable: it is a legitimate object of theoretical inquiry only if it is seen as following the discursive "routes" of hegemony, without which it cannot be granted the right to conceptualization.

Politics, apprehended within the identitarian logic of the status quo, always falls back on this simple calculus: passivize absolute negativity, force it to become *passive*.

We can draw two conclusions from this:

1. That negativity, when thought as an *absolute*, is *potentially* destructive. This is why Laclau and Mouffe place a ban on its eruption, requiring that it be refracted through the prism of the hegemonic moment so that it remains knowable and, within the terms of political discourse,

[13] Slavoj Zizek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 265.

controllable, thinkable as a disruptor only when it can serve to merely drive the positivity of the moments into a state of relative disarray.

2. That this refraction of absolute negativity constitutes a passivization and subsumption; absolute negativity becomes yet another term in the discourse, and is then undercut by another one altogether in a continuous oscillation between exteriority and interiority. Such is the formula for the antagonism described by hegemony, which consists of the stabilization of the status quo as antagonism.

Even when Laclau writes of a radical break, this stabilization qua antagonism remains paradigmatic. In his book on populism, Laclau says that "the passage from one hegemonic formation, or popular confrontation, to another will always involve a radical break." This radical break signals the emergence of "the people," signified by "the unification of a plurality of demands."[14] Inasmuch as the "new order" whose advent this break designates remains hegemonic, since proposing otherwise would undermine the very theoretico-political foundations through which every positivity must be annulled, Laclau's break is a break between two hegemonic topologies. The form of politics remains the same. What is broken is not the terrain of discursivity, the chain of terms expressed therein, but their *mode of organization*. The manner in which antagonism is stabilized as *the* form of politics is left undamaged.

We should keep the following proposition in mind: that this form of antagonism is actually the *structural precondition for the State's constitution*. San Juan's notion of the necessity of a Philippine national-popular/popular-democratic will *is* this pluralization of demands unified by the provisional "point" of the popular: the national-popular/popular-democratic formula is bracketed, in its

[14] Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (New York: Verso, 2005), 228.

presentation, by placing "the popular" in between the two conditions of the "national" and the "democratic." *Who* legislates the hegemonization and the definitions of the national and the democratic remains unclear in San Juan's formulation.

If we recall the first conclusion above, however, this vagueness disappears: the "who" that legislates the hegemonic relation is the one that defines politics through force, the one who legitimizes a political relation by passivizing the absolute negativity of its form. And if we think about Lenin's definition of democracy as the formalization of capitalist force, *this relation truly becomes democratic*. It is the democracy of the CPP-Maoist. It is the Philippine State.

1.2 Filipino Axiomatics: The Reign of Antagonism

A. The Envelopment of Three Terms

The problem that populism faces, in the case of the Philippine diaspora, is that the nation, the ideal site of an emergent democratic society, is indistinguishable, in the last analysis, from the State, which appropriates democracy for itself so as to suppress any truly egalitarian social formation—the formation, in other words, represented by the concept of the nation. We can say that this designates the closure of a rift between two kinds of democracy: substantive, "real" democracy, and formal democracy. The CPP-Maoist—who, among Filipino radicals, have advanced the most clearly delineated concept of a "free" Philippines thus far (as far as I have encountered)—erases this difference; we saw that their concept of a popular democracy, as a centralizing organizer of social, political, economic, and (as they state elsewhere in their "Programme") cultural

developments, recognizes the State as *the* horizon for any real democracy's existence. The popular that appears to provide the substantive anchor for this democracy assumes the topology of the concept of hegemony I described in the preceding section. It is *the people* that enters into the relation defined by the CPP-Maoist as the meeting of "all democratic classes." Enclosed by the equally central force of the nation, it follows that the people can only be described as *Filipino*.

This may at first seem banal, too obvious to mention. It is only natural, after all, that, yes, the popular masses of a non-Western nation struggling to free itself from foreign domination and internal corruption—what used to be called the postcolonial nation—should assume the sign of that emergent, rebellious collectivity that can only be thought *by way of the inscription that the nation bestows upon its "members."* This sense of membership, for the most part, has always assumed a kind of ethnic and racial character, which become the foundations for a properly *cultural* identification that is then capable of transforming the political economy of the country. The concept of "Filipino-ness" becomes homogeneous, the name of a self-identical ethnic, racial, and cultural belonging that defines and delimits a political economic struggle *for* the nation that gives to the Filipino his or her identity. The nation, in other words, arises *as* the meeting of all democratic classes, as the emergence of a democratic topology, *identified as Filipino*. But because the CPP-Maoist conflates substantive, real democracy and formal democracy, the Filipino, *as nation and as people*, is virtually indistinguishable from the State—or rather, comes to be defined through the State as the organizer of consensus. It follows that the force required of the State not only determines who is democratic, but who is properly Filipino as well.

My thesis is runs as follows: that this imbrication and envelopment of nation, people, and State under the sign of the Filipino is itself enveloped in the logics of another power. This power is Empire.

B. The Imperial Axiom

As a political category, the Filipino emerged from the nineteenth-century's nationalist, anti-colonial politics of the *ilustrado* class, who appropriated the name from the Spanish *criollos* in order to transform it into an ethno-political marker of anti-Spanish sentiment, the designator of a newly-born politicized collectivity.[15] This act of self-designation, of self-naming, is what concerns me, since its bears within itself the foundations of the problems outlined above: a) the unquestioned politics of a Filipino *identity*, and b) the subsequently unquestioned alignment of this identity with a nationalist political program. There is, admittedly, a certain power in this act of self-naming, and it is what I will reconceptualize in order to develop a theory of a militant diasporic Filipino politics. But we have not yet arrived at the moment when it is possible to develop this theory positively, since the problems of nationalism, conceived as the only proper politics for a genuinely radical Filipino ontology, have not yet been fully examined. Let us see what this alignment of identity and nation entails.

In his pioneering studies on the constitution of the Philippine State, Patricio Abinales has shown that the "patchwork character" of the Philippines' political economy has remained, since the inception of American rule, the prevalent mode of

[15] See Renato Constantino, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited* (3rd ed. Manila: Tala Publishing Services, 1975), 147 – 8; and León Ma. Guerrero, *The First Filipino: A Biography of José P. Rizal* (10th ed. Manila: National Historical Institute, 2001), 496 – 7.

State politics. It is, as he says, the most "convenient way to keep together the 'series of societies' that make up the formal body politic called the Philippines."[16]

Abinales has isolated three significant forms of rule that were exported to the Philippines at the beginning of the twentieth-century by a Progressive-minded American elite, who privileged the creation of autonomous sites in the manner of its laissez-faire economic theories. The result was a highly differentiated set of political economic "units" that were assimilated to the topology of the State:

1. *Tutelage*. The "civilized" and "civilizable" mestizos of the metropolitan areas (namely, Manila) were engaged through the *indirect* means of political and economic education so that, theoretically, the Philippine elite could be guided towards national sovereignty.
2. *Military rule.* The "uncivilized" and "uncivilizable" populations of the Moro and Cordillera provinces were ruled *directly* by the American military administration.
3. *Cacique democracy*. The Americans preserved a decentralized form of governance by maintaining the structure of the caciques (local patron-client relations) implemented during Spanish rule.

These differentiations were supported by a racial taxonomy. Moreover, the logic that underpinned the military administration's direct rule over the Moro and Cordillera regions verged on a kind of racist sentimentalism: the administration saw itself as preserving and protecting a race uncorrupted, unlike the mestizo elite, by the Spanish. It used segregation to legitimize direct rule; the *indio* was incapable of governing itself and thus required surveillance. If need be, brute force was also used, clothed in the infamous rhetoric of "benevolent assimilation." In spite of its

[16] Patricio Abinales, "Progressive-Machine Conflict in Early-Twentieth-Century U.S. Politics and Colonial-State Building in the Philippines," *The American Colonial State in the Philippines; Global Perspectives* (Ed. Julian Go and Anne L. Foster. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 173.

corrupted sensibilities, however, the Philippine elite, represented by the mestizos in the major cities, would preside over this Philippine commonwealth, educated—and educatable—by Western forms of science, political theory, and economics.[17] The Philippines remained until roughly 1914 unintegrated. Yet even after "integration," when the commonwealth years gave way to the era of a fully centralized State under the designation of a "free" Philippine republic, this patchwork remained untouched. Throughout the last century, this patchwork has supported and enabled the cooperation between the American government, international capital, and the Philippine State. This failed integration, I maintain, *is a prerequisite for the State's constitution*.

I will advance the following thesis: that the State's function necessitates antagonisms. There are two types of antagonisms that, in my estimation, are predominant:

1. An *internal* antagonism. This is *positively* constitutive of the State, and is exemplified by the decentralized forms of rule that maintain a cacique democracy in the provinces and a "normal" governmental form of rule in the metropolitan centers.
2. An *external* and *negatively* constitutive antagonism. This kind can be found in the forms of anti-Statist rebellion that still manage to be reincorporated, assimilated, and ultimately neutralized by the State and its political, economic, and military arms.

The Philippine State is a heterogeneity, a politico-economic disunity, *the agent and outcome of the reproduction of antagonisms*.

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[17] Patricio Abinales, *Making Mindanao: Cotabato and Davao in the Formation of the Philippine Nation-State* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000), *passim*; and "Progressive-Machine Conflict," *passim*.

But it is so inasmuch as it is also able to reconcile these antagonisms into a political economic positivity that is the State-form. This is what I will call the State's *axiomatic production*, its cooperation with Empire and capital as accomplice *and* product of its relationship to them. This axiomatic production requires, in turn, that the components constitutive of antagonism possess an *apodicticity*. Both a positively and negativity constitutive antagonism need to be intelligible as such in order for the State to be able to police itself—by either fully appeasing its politicians and citizens, or by a program of outright force, from impoverishment, to displacement, and to what is now called "low-intensity warfare."

Insofar as a determinate negativity—a protester, an anarchist, a rebellious student—exists, it can, to the State, become a positivity. I will term this positivization an *axiomatic Filipinization*, the product of the reproduction of the State's constitutive antagonisms. In this type of Filipinization, the disruptor of the State becomes intelligible—again, through force—as a partial identity of the State, and whatever excesses it represents become integrated.

This topology, moreover, is thoroughly hegemonic, in the *formal* sense I gave to it in my analysis of Laclau and Mouffe's use of the term: as the continual reproduction of antagonisms. These antagonisms reproduce the status quo. A Philippine axiomatics is able to recognize that which is apparently excessive to the State, and turns it into a determination of its logic: as an element *against which it can recompose itself* (through reform, through negotiations, through escalated repression, and so on), thus positivizing, within the field of antagonism, that which initially presented itself as its negation.

This is where disengaging the national-popular/popular-democratic from the logic of the State becomes impossible. Demonstrating the existence of a unified political field, defined as the hegemonic inscription of a national-democratic

Filipino-ness with which a diasporic Filipino politics can identify, is a highly strained procedure: it requires logically separating this politics from the antagonistic topology of the State. *It requires separating its concept of Filipino-ness from the State's axiomatic Filipinization.* But this is not possible. Both necessitate a single presupposition, their logical bulwark: *the apodicticity of the terms through which the Philippines, both as an idea and a material outcome, emerges*. The antagonisms constitutive of a) the Philippine State, as both axiomatic generator and outcome, and b) of the Philippine national-popular/popular-democratic will, as the emanation of a hegemonic topology, are *formally identical*. Their logic shares the following formula: produce antagonisms, but produce them within a unified field of *determinate* antagonists. The national-popular/popular-democratic requires passing *through* the logic of the State in order to actualize the political relation it names.

The solution to this theoretico-political impasse is as follows: separate the category of the Filipino as a political signifier without passing through the State's axiomatic. An alternative Filipinization needs to be wrested from an axiomatic Filipinization and its primary function: to reconcile antagonisms by turning them into, in Laclau and Mouffe's terms, *moments constitutive of State politics*.

What this solution requires, if it is indeed a question of the power of self-naming *in* the Philippine diaspora, is a theory of a new *perspective* within which the Philippines-diaspora relation can be rethought against a politics that recapitulates, by way of the formal equivalencies between identity, nation, and State, an axiomatic Filipinization. This is a politics, in other words, that bears within itself the *absolute negativity* that is always being refracted in the relations that contour the status quo. It is a perspective that disavows this refraction's relation to the Philippine axiomatic and exploits its capacity to act as a destroyer of its discursive terrain.

For the rest of this chapter, my analysis will turn upon developing, in their turns:

1. The perspective of a non-hierarchical political subject.
2. The "mutated" concept of the Philippines-diaspora relation that this subject and its perspective encompass.
3. The "place" absolute negativity occupies in the thought of a political ontology of the Filipino diaspora.

This requires demonstrating the possibilities of thinking a new concept of diasporic Filipino-ness itself, one that does not conform to the logic of the State and concede to its axiomatic topology.

1.3 The Horizons of a Political Ontology II: Totalization

A. What Freedom?

A non-hierarchical perspective of the Filipino diaspora would have to consist of the following: a thought on the diaspora that cannot be reduced to the nation or nation-state. What, then, is the "place" of this thought and, conversely, the thinking subject? It would have to be a thought through which the subject thinks his or her *distance* and *separation* from the Philippine nation. I am not, of course, positing the geographical distance and separation that the diasporic subject faces; what I refer to as distance and separation involves an *ontological* and *political* distance from the site that, it must be admitted, nonetheless anchors, however strongly or weakly, the subjectivity in question. For why call the militant subject, or even the diaspora itself, no less, Filipino at all? Why not simply abandon this designation and absolve oneself of the inscription that, up until now, I

have attacked as an outright capitulation to the State, empire, and capital? Because, and this answer forms the polemical core of this chapter, if not this dissertation, the name carries within itself that absolute negativity of which I earlier spoke. It is the bearer of its own negation, one that cannot possibly erupt without in some ways conceding to the inexorability of the dominant forces at work in the very act of the designation itself.

This paradox is encapsulated in that dense philosophical category: *the attribute*. I take my definition of the attribute from Antonio Negri's reading, in his *Savage Anomaly*, of Proposition 19 of Spinoza's *Ethics*: "God is eternal, all of God's attributes are external."[18] The relation between God and the attribute is that between the Idea and its incarnations, the attributes being the profane manifestation of an eternal and divine Presence. For Negri, the attribute allowed Spinoza to posit the existence of a thought *on* God, the substance; it is the vehicle through which the intellect can grasp the substance *as* substance. Negri's reading identifies a remarkable tension in this formulation: Spinoza, by positing the intellect, was also able to posit the existence of spontaneity. This meant that the thinking subject had the capacity organize itself qua the substance. Thought is thus *independent of the substance* while nonetheless seeking identity with it. The tension, then, is this: that spontaneity, and the freedom of thought that finds itself imbedded therein, is animated by the *mediations* imposed upon it by the always external substance, the principal Idea, God. Spontaneity is therefore possible only insofar as thought arises as the *consciousness* of this mediation, the awareness that the identity that it seeks with God is impossible *except* through the mediations that allow it indirect access. The subject thinks its inevitable *separation* from the substance; but it also thinks its

[18] Quoted in Antonio Negri, *The Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza's Metaphysics and Politics* (3rd ed. Tr. Michael Hardt. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 58.

unity to it. But this unity is not an ontological unity—it is a purely *conceptual* unity, one that thinks the substance *as* substance and nothing more, an identity borne by the idea of the substance's inaccessibility. That it can never be reached without mediation is therefore the closest the subject can get to it.

Contrary to what Negri says,[19] then, the substance is *not* the pure horizon of being, the ultimate guarantor of meaning that confers upon the subject his or her significance. Rather, the horizon *is the mediation*, the insertion of the *idea* of inaccessibility into the relation and which then comes to define the concept of the substance. Inasmuch as the attribute is an *emanation* of the substance, it is also the thinker *of* substance*, the creator of the idea of substance and thus the creator of the horizon of being as thought itself*. This is why Negri can say that the attribute, despite the fact that it "[takes] root . . . in being," "does not negate its function *as the transgressor of the identity*."[20] The attribute allows the subject *to think itself qua the substance, a substance whose idea the subject has nonetheless produced as precondition and horizon for its being, which secures and transgresses identity in the same movement*. And this all happens in and as thought—*in and as the subject's perspective qua the substance*.

This is a rather tenuous proposal. Why? Because it posits an immanence that distributes a plane of equality and absolute unity held together by an inaccessible Idea: God. This immanence, in other words, limits itself by its aggressive fidelity to a hierarchy: all things are equal under the single, reigning legitimator. Equally vexing is Negri's solution to this apparent paradox. He posits the following relation and attempts to locate the subject's separation from the substance as the spontaneity required of a subject freed from the domination of the

[19] *ibid*, 56 – 7.
[20] *ibid*, 57 (emphasis added).

Idea: that thought takes over and *produces* a horizon of being that does not posit the existence of an all-determining substance, but rather a "dimension of the world that is not hierarchical but, rather, flat, equal, versatile and equivalent. The absolute essence, predicated univocally, refers as much to the divine essence (the existence of God) as it does to all the things that descend from its essence."[21] This flattening, equalizing, and "horizontalizing" of the world means that "the attributes "are not mediated by anything; rather, they simply pose themselves in an immediate relationship of the *production of substance*."[22] What is univocal, then, is the capacity of every subject to participate in the production of substance, a production that in its turn also produces the subject—its self-constitutive force—and the idea of that great, Deleuzian category: univocality.

What is univocal is the attribute's—*every* attribute's—power to *express* the One that it creates. But why posit the existence of an Idea that stands above us? Why posit humanity as the thinker of its submission to a higher power? Is it any better to posit this submission as the outcome of a spontaneous willingness to produce the idea of this higher power as the capacity of every subject's thought? The problem with Negri's formulation on the subject, ultimately, is this: that the *tension* inherent in the separation-identity relation is dissolved by the immanence that he seeks to establish as a precondition for freedom and non-mediation. It is this tension that allows us to ask, not only of Negri's formulation, but also of the problems of diaspora, why the *nominal strength* of an Idea or nation can still prevail within a dispersed and topographically multiple ontology.

Immanence, it seems, needs to be reformulated beyond the apparent dissolution of all mediations, as Negri does. It needs to be rethought *through* the

[21] *ibid*, 62.
[22] *ibid*, 63 (emphasis added).

tension that the attribute produces—which is essentially a *self*-mediation—so that the problem of how the subject can actually think itself—not only qua itself, but in relation to multiplicities and to States—can be reckoned with.

B. Becoming-Filipino

This dissertation, of course, is only the first step towards this massive politico-philosophical undertaking, all the more so for having such a particular topic: the Filipino diaspora. Following the problems I posed in the previous section, then, we can say that the attribute is the name "Filipino." Of course, the Philippines-diaspora relationship has very little to do, beyond the purely formal level, with the attribute-substance, subject-God relation that concerns Spinoza. But because the relation, for me, is *formal*, the problems that Negri takes up in order to give a new philosophical dimension to immanence and transform it (especially in his more recent work) into the ontological horizon for a revolutionary, anti-imperial multitude are the same problems that I confront in this dissertation: namely, how to think a global political ontology as an immanent collectivity, and what kinds of constructions surreptitiously and unconsciously resurrect a hierarchy that this ontology seeks to abolish in the first place. Such a problem encounters its most explicit limitations when this political ontology is circumscribed under the designation "diaspora," for the name that the diaspora adopts for itself is linked directly to a nation or nation-state that maintains a primacy that it seems unable, or unwilling, to shake. This is the same problem that Negri's concept of immanence does not address: the fact that, as soon as the philosopher or theorist posits the existence of a self-constitutive collectivity qua the attribute, he will inevitably have to posit this collectivity's *submission* to a concept or ideal that seems all the more

insidious because this collectivity has *created* this concept or ideal and transformed it into *the* legitimating force of its being.

What we can thus save from Negri's theorization of the attribute is this: the *idea* (and not the form) of the subject's self-constitution and its immanent power. Negri's proposal that the subject, by way of the attribute, *exceeds* any relation of identity with the substance can be retained as the starting point. With this in mind, I will advance the following hypothesis: that it is possible to think of the Filipino diaspora itself as an immanence, and that to do so would be to think through the tensions inherent in attribution, namely, its separation from a central, organizing principle and its necessary positing of this principle as the emblem and foundation for its existence. A militant Filipino diasporic politics is *initiated* by such a thought; it allows the diasporic subject to think itself in the way peculiar to the operations of the attribute: as the *self-mediator* of its relation to the multiplicity that is the diaspora as well as to the Philippine nation that is its putative Idea.

In his introduction to novelist Carlos Bulosan's collection of short stories, essays, and poems, *On Becoming Filipino*, San Juan proposes a reading of Bulosan's work as the exemplary instance of a "becoming Filipino," which, for San Juan, describes the trajectory of Bulosan's racial and class consciousness. What is striking about this formulation is that San Juan identifies this becoming's catalyst as Bulosan's displacement from the Philippines. As a farmworker and cannery worker in the fields and factories of the U.S., he was able to find some sense of solidarity with the struggle against capital and empire "at home."[23] At first, this may seem to be a complete rehearsal of the nationalist paradigm I refuted earlier. In some senses, it is. If we take San Juan's description of the paucity of a "genuinely"

[23] See Epifanio San Juan, Jr., "Introduction," *On Becoming Filipino: Selected Writing of Carlos Bulosan* (Ed. Epifanio San Juan, Jr. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 1 – 44.

Filipino political ontology "at home," however, becoming Filipino acquires a different meaning. How is it that San Juan is able to posit two apparently different conditionalities for the diaspora? On the one hand, there is the lamentation of the impossibility of establishing, in the U.S., a truly radical politics due to the absence of a hard core revolutionary—and collective—Philippine nationalism. On the other hand, there is the celebration of Bulosan's work as the expression of just such a diasporic subjectivity.

I think the difficulty lies in the fact that there are two different perspectives being developed here: the lamentation derives from the perspective of a *delimitable* collectivity, definable and made intelligible qua the Philippines, whereas the celebration of Bulosan comes from the perspective of the *individual subject* that has managed to *redefine the Philippines qua the diaspora*. The latter is a complete reversal of the former. It is the perspective of attribution conceived as the self-mediation of the subject. Because Bulosan became Filipino only by observing and experiencing American imperialism and capitalism, the Philippines is cut through with all the difficulties that empire and capital pose outside of its borders. It is refracted. Moreover, it is also *displaced*. The name "Filipino" loses its ability to designate a diasporic subject's total abandonment to a nationalist project because this nation no longer consists of the apodicticity it once upheld as the portico of diasporic being. Becoming Filipino means redefining the Philippines as a mediated thing.

This should not be taken lightly. Becoming Filipino *is the perspective that arises when the diasporic subject thinks its capacity to place the Philippines at a distance and to thus turn its apodictic centrality into an obscure and mediated presence*.

We are far from an axiomatic Filipinization here. To think diasporically involves a thought on the diasporic subject as the *abolition of a collectivity*, if we define a collectivity as a self-enclosed political commons, united by the organizing principle that is the Philippine nation and State. Inasmuch as the name "Filipino" persists, its capacity to define the subject is transformed as well: in *not* naming a delimitable collectivity, it nonetheless serves to designate a *general* political ontology that creates the *idea* of a diaspora. Let me state this more clearly. The "Filipino," if it neither designates allegiance to the nation and State, nor to a delimitable collectivity, *becomes the principle of thought that allows the diasporic subject to apprehend itself as belonging within the two forms of being described therein: 1) as the "distanciator" of the Philippines, and 2) as the destroyer of the diaspora's self-identity.* The "Filipino" designates a general political ontology of the diaspora inasmuch as becoming Filipino is a thought on this dual negation—*as a general formula for establishing the immanence of the diaspora*.

If attribution also means self-mediation, it is only because, in the case of becoming Filipino, this mediation happens doubly: to become Filipino is to *name oneself qua this distanciation and destruction of identity*. It is a thought that adopts for itself a negativity whose power lies in its capacity to liquidate the very ontological foundations that materialize at the advent of the name. This is the negativity of becoming Filipino: the *absolute* negativity of an axiomatic Filipinization.

Let us state more explicitly what this becoming consists of.

1.5 Absolute Destroyer

A. A Militant Constellation

We have arrived at a set of premises by which to establish the core political ontology of this dissertation. The "Filipino," *as a becoming*:

a. distances the Philippine nation and State,

b. destroys the self-enclosed identity of the Filipino diaspora,

c. designates a *general* political ontology, and

d. produces the idea of an immanent diaspora.

The premise to which we have devoted the least amount of analysis and exposition is the Filipino's generality. Nonetheless, it is the operative category, and for the following reason: the Filipino is both specific and delimiting and *generic*. It is a generality with conditions: that the political ontology in question can be conceived as generic only insofar as it is also nameable. The name Filipino imposes limitations that make it impossible to conceive of the diaspora, as a non-delimitable ontology, *as infinite*. If the diaspora is indeed non-delimitable, it is also not without limits. The question is how to think these limits—the horizons imposed by the name—such that the centrality of the State, which the name harbors within itself as a possibility, does not materialize and dominate the diaspora's politics.

The Filipino is a general—or rather, generic—political ontology, I maintain, because it is the perspective of the subject—as a becoming Filipino—that thinks itself *in* the diaspora as its most basic political form. We must not take for granted the apparently simple fact that the diasporic Filipino—conceived as such, that is, as a generic subject—*is, geographically speaking, everywhere*. This is why adopting the name Filipino, the becoming Filipino that emblematized Carlos Bulosan's life

as a migrant worker, requires a fundamental distance from the nation: it is impossible to locate the Filipino as a regional ontology, as a nationalist ontology.

Dethroning the Philippines, however, requires a certain rigor that demands thinking the name's validity *in spite of the nation and the State*. It means *de-positivizing*, in the way that Laclau and Mouffe do to political subjectivities, the Philippines. If the Filipino is everywhere, this is because an axiomatic Filipinization happens across the world, from every region of the diaspora *to the regions that comprise the Philippines and its patchwork political economy*. Patricio Abinales' studies allow us to see that the Philippines is a unity only because of an incredible amount of force; it seems to strain under the pressures of axiomatization, linking itself to neoliberal capital while it contends with the forces that threaten to pull it apart from within. These regions, from the diaspora to the Philippines, *must be thought as univocal sites where the expression of a becoming Filipino can take place, if only because they each designate a site for the axiomatic production of a Filipino aligned with the process of accumulation, the expansion of military aggression, and the constitution of electoral (formal) democratic States*.

This "regionality" is to be taken literally: it can mean a suburb of Los Angeles, a street in Rome, a corner in Daly City, a district in Hong Kong, and so on. And if the Philippines is de-positivized, this can only mean that it too must be thought as a series of regionalities inhabited by Filipino subjects: the student in Manila, the farmworker in Negros, the guerilla in the Cordilleras, the fisherman in Mindoro, and so on. Each region represents a site within which axiomatization happens; each one designates a location that attempts to Filipinize the individual accordingly: as the domestic worker remitting her earnings to the Philippines from Los Angeles or Rome, as the student in Quezon City courted by IMF liaisons planted in the government, as the proletarianized rice and corn farmer forced by the

WTO to herd cattle and grow commercial crops on razed land. Every region is emblematized by what I termed an imperial axiomatics, from the diaspora to the Philippines.

Formally speaking, then, the Philippines, *must be "diasporized."* Every region poses a challenge to the axiomatic production of the Filipino—wherever it takes place. The subject's perspective is thus *deep* inasmuch as it is able to think through the depths at which axiomatization occurs. And it is because of this depth that the subject apprehends the Philippines in a kind of inverse position: the Philippines *belongs within* the diaspora, instead of the diaspora belonging *to* the Philippines.

I will call this new relation between the diaspora and the Philippines their mutual *constellationality*. What I am writing of here, then, is a *constellational diaspora*. The subject, the becoming Filipino, is *the constellational subject* that repudiates the imperial axiom's attempt to devour it.

This is an *open* constellationality that opposes itself to the closed, hierarchical model that predisposes itself to adopting some version of nationalism, populism, and hegemony. But towards what, in its constellationality, is this diaspora opened?

This is where the concept of absolute negativity returns. Absolute negativity is a refraction that takes place through the name Filipino, which serves as simultaneous limit and instigator of the open and infinite—the necessary tension that characterizes a politics *of* the diaspora as an eternally named thing. This is a name that *precedes* its ontological elaboration, and threatens to axiomatize it before it even has a chance to become militant.

But this is where the name's power lies. Because it *is* this tension, it has the capacity to give rise to the negativity—the absolute negativity—that the name, as

designator of a delimited positivity, posits: *nothing less than a Filipino axiomatics itself*. Absolute negativity *refracts* itself through the name as designation of a *constellationality* and thus abolishes the power of axiomatization. The absolute negativity *of* the name Filipino is its appropriation of the name *as the signpost for the end—and this is where its excessiveness lies—of the Philippine nation's viability as a political category*. It is the extreme negativity that cannot be incorporated into a status quo politics, because this politics' aim is the opposite: to maintain, under the conditions of hegemony, a constant reshuffling of the constitutive "moments" so as to render *effective* the idea of the nation as an enclosed political totality *qua the State*.

This is a new kind of immanence, one that does not surreptitiously posit the existence of a principle beyond itself, and which thus redefines the attribute's capacity to name the multiple.

B. The Name of the Diasporic Event

Becoming Filipino, in every sense, constitutes an *event*. Here, I take up Alain Badiou's formulation, since, for me, it allows us to think absolute negativity by way of the tensions that it engenders, tensions that, in the last analysis, comprise the militancy of its political consequences.

In the language of set theory, Badiou describes the event, from which the void (or, in my terminology, absolute negativity) erupts, thusly: "If there exists an event, *its belonging to the situation of the site is undecidable from the standpoint of the situation itself*. That is, the signifier of the event [which he designates by the matheme e_x, read as 'the event of the site X'] is necessarily supernumerary to the site."[24] The event is undecidable from the standpoint of the situation because what

[24] *Being and Event*, 181.

is called into question is whether or not the event belongs to it. If it does, then the void's eruption is barred from the start. It is merely designated by a term "presented" in the situation, co-opted from the start by the discursive force of the status quo. But if the event does not belong, then what it designates, the name it carries into the situation and introduces by way of the void, is unrecognizable except *to the void itself*, unintelligible except *as and from* the void of the situation.

But this creates an impasse: if the void abolishes the consensus, and by extension every categorical definition that allows thinking to happen, how can the void be thought at all? Badiou's solution is elegant: unite the two options, combine them in their effects and *see* the void from the perspective of its interruption of the logic of the situation. The result is what Badiou calls "the being of non-being, namely, *existing*." Its "presentation" in the situation induces the void's eruption as the being that designates the non-being from which it issues and from which it comes: it "[forces] the situation itself to confess to its own void, and thereby to let forth . . . the incandescent non-being of an existence."[25] The event, because it belongs to the situation, lets the void be named, but because it also cannot belong, what is named is the non-being and absolute negativity of the situation itself.

A common solution is encountered in the problem of the name "Filipino." This is where the problem of the attribute can begin to be solved qua the problem of the multiple that, as we saw in Negri, is always potentially subjected to the authority of the Idea. The attribute, ever the name of the State, by "using" *the* primary term of the axiomatic field—the Filipino—also discloses the existence of some originary point at which the imperial axiomatic's self-constitution can be glimpsed as the banning of absolute negativity: "It is necessary to prohibit that catastrophe of presentation which would be its encounter with its own void, the

[25] *ibid*, 183.

presentational occurrence of inconsistency as such, or the ruin of the One."[26] The One, in which the state of things becomes "structured," by positing "being-qua-being,"[27] by regulating the correspondence of all the terms of the axiomatic field, attempts to actualize itself through the ban on absolute negativity, whose presence creates inconsistencies that *cannot* be subsumed under the form of a hegemonic politics, under the binary logic of positive and negative antagonisms I mentioned earlier. Becoming Filipino names the negation of axiomatization and the dissolution of constitutive antagonisms because it discloses those radiant gaps of negativity dimmed when the State, Empire, and capital turn difference, in the manner of a hegemonic refraction, into their main features. Becoming Filipino, as attribution, inscribes an elliptical path: it arises from the axiomatic field only to sink back into it, and in so doing blasts holes through it at those very points—or regions—in which axiomatization happens, like a missile fired at a ninety-degree angle.

The constellational diaspora thus describes the precariousness in which every constellational subject, every becoming Filipino, is submerged. The attribute emblematizes the *erosion* of which this becoming is the advent. Immanence is thus multiple inasmuch as the multiple expressed therein is characterized by its constant erosion of every ground—or rather, of the erasure of every horizon that materializes in order to imprison the subject within the walls of the axiom. This erosion, moreover, is precisely the *self-mediating* capacity of the subject thought as a becoming Filipino. Ultimately, this is its most militant gesture yet: that it thinks its own inability to be delimited, that it posits, in a very real sense, its *infinity* as the

[26] *ibid*, 93.
[27] *ibid*, 184.

impossible premise for its political ontology. It is to this notion of time—or, if we are speaking of infinities, of time's *disassembling*—that we will now turn.

CHAPTER 2
(IN) THE NAME OF REVOLUTION

". . . disarmed in the very citadel of their State machine . . ."
——Louis Althusser, "Contradiction and Overdetermination

We have defined a militant diasporic ontology as a becoming-Filipino, but we still need to define its ontological qualities. This chapter will proceed as an enumeration and rereading of a now rather much maligned philosopher: Louis Althusser. A lot has been made of his "theoreticism," as it has been called; I do not wish to dispute this criticism, nor do I wish to defend it. What I will do instead is simply think of it own its own terms, to offer up a reading of two of his most famous essays, "Contradiction and Overdetermination" and "From *Capital* to Marx's Philosophy," the latter included in his equally famous, if not infamous, text, *Reading Capital*. If anything, this chapter, if not an outright defense of Althusser, is at least an acknowledgement of what, in my estimation, is a key development in the philosophy of revolutionary subjectivities: a philosophical methodology that conceptualizes what it means to think, and in so doing, to name and create, this revolutionary subjectivity.

This naming, of course, was the subject of the previous chapter; this chapter will thus develop this naming and the *form of thought* required to think it, a thought that initiates the becoming it designates. Becoming, apropos of its logic, has everything to do with time. If the first chapter was tinged with a bit of anarchism, then this chapter, proceeding as it does through Althusser's theory of the subject, and then finishing off with a rereading of Marx's *Grundrisse* and its implications

for rethinking the immanence of the Filipino diaspora, colors this anarchism with a Marxist logic of revolutionary time.

2.1 An Assault Against Which Defense Is Impossible

A. A Self-Constitutive Power

Althusser gives a name to the subjective force of a revolution: the ruptural unity, the prime example of which was the Bolshevik Revolution. Described in "Contradiction and Overdetermination," the concept of the ruptural unity initiates Althusser's infamous attack on the Hegelian Ideal: namely, that history cannot be conceived as a sequence dominated by a single Spirit that simply unfolds itself, giving birth in the process to an understanding that merely has to determine the specific manifestations of this Spirit in order to make sense of political, economic, and social transformations. For Althusser, these so-called transformations are not transformations at all; because they are nothing more than mutations of a single logic, they remain fixed, reflective of the Historical Ideal in all its intransitive permanence.

Althusser thus rethinks the Bolshevik Revolution as having arisen from an entirely new logic altogether, from an alternative perspective that, in opposition to the Hegelian perspective, which posits a standpoint outside of the concrete developments of history in order to paradoxically return to it (with a transcendent, immaterial logic), can best be described as *immanent*. Consequently, Althusser refutes even the generalizing logic of a "general contradiction," the dialectic

between two antagonistic classes.[1] Instead, he proposes the following thesis: that the Revolution was born *from its own subjective force*:

> the *possible* revolution was a matter of *an accumulation and exacerbation of historical contradictions* that would have been incomprehensible in any country which was not, as Russia was, *simultaneously at least a century behind the imperialist world, and at the peak of its development*. . . . This exceptional situation was 'insoluble' (for the ruling classes) and Lenin was correct to see in it the *objective conditions* of a Russian revolution, and to forge its *subjective conditions*, the means of a decisive assault on this weak link in the imperialist chain, in a Communist Party that was a chain without weak links.[2]

In Althusser's analysis, Lenin recognized these objective conditions, which are described in explicitly *economic* terms: Russia was not only a century behind U.S. and Western European imperialism, it was also a society marked by both feudalism and industrialism (at that time, Russia had the largest factory in the world, the Putilov works at Petrograd).[3] .

The subjective conditions, however, remain irreducible to economic terms. These conditions are subjective because they represent a logic of recognition built upon the foundations of an immanent forging of revolutionary possibilities. This logic consists of recognizing that these possibilities, in the case of Russia, arise when the objective conditions could be *exploited* by a collectivity driven by its *self-constitutive* power. This collectivity was composed *against* and *in spite of* the

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[1] Louis Althusser, "Contradiction and Overdetermination," *For Marx* (Tr. Ben Brewster, Vintage: New York, 1969), 99.
[2] *ibid*, 97 – 8.
[3] *ibid*, 96.

dialectic: its only way of inducing a "single national crisis" was to "fuse" into a massive collectivity uncontainable and indescribable according to the logic of class alone. Ruptural unity is the precondition for Althusser's elaboration of a revolutionary subjectivity that does not follow the line of History but instead constitutes itself according to the ensemble of relations it faces, which must be determined by the logic immanent *to the collectivity itself, and not to the Historical Idea*.

This collectivity, moreover, is always *in the process of becoming*; there is no "being" that precedes the recognition of the objective conditions; rather, the becoming of the revolutionary collectivity runs in tandem with the logic that allows it to recognize itself in its becoming as the *subject* of a national crisis. This becoming is thus inseparable from its thought on its own subjectivity: militant practice is completely immanent to a militant logic, and vice versa.

In this formulation, then, Lenin plays a crucial role: he *names* the possibility of militancy. The subjectivation that happens *through* him is doubled: the subject is both the *effect of the naming* and *the one doing the naming*, i.e. the Bolshevik Revolution and Lenin himself. It is the collectivity as product of the naming process and the individual subject who *posits* the existence of an *immanent, militant logic*, the characteristic "correctness" of Lenin's vision, as Althusser calls it. The collectivity is thus marked by a profound contingency: its immanent logic is posited, it is named and *given* the force of a revolutionary will, but by an apparently exterior agent. This is possible only insofar as this agent, *by naming the revolution, becomes a subject him or herself,* and as such can be said to *belong within the collective* that the naming subject *subjectivates*.

Here, we see a refinement of the form of becoming I advanced in the first chapter. We saw that the Filipino designates both the subject's distanciation from

the Philippines and the diaspora's non-delimitability, and that this describes the general political ontology of the diaspora's immanence. The advent of the revolutionary collectivity is thus directly articulated to the function of the name, which, by designating the subject's *inclusion* within the collectivity that can neither be delimited nor anchored according to an identitarian logic, functions as a double negation. The subject is logically incapable of being completely included in the collectivity that, by being named qua the subject, becomes immanent; actualizing this kind of diasporic immanence, moreover, is the process by which the subject subjectivates him or herself—by which the subject, in other words, *names the revolutionary collectivity as the domain into which he or she introduces him or herself*. The naming of the diaspora qua subject, and vice versa, presupposes the recognition of a possibility.

In Althusser, this recognition is tied to an objective situation. What could this mean for the Filipino diaspora? Does this reduce the workings of a diasporic political ontology to a waiting game, where conditions have to be ripe in order for action to not only be possible, but legitimate? If we recall Althusser's analysis of the October Revolution, the objective situation is actually a *concept* that makes the possibility of revolutionary action thinkable, a concept that has nothing to do with "the economic base" or to the pure dialectical comportments of capitalist power. The objective situation, on the other hand, is a matter of *perspective*: it is thinkable only from the standpoint of the *subjectivating force of the revolutionary collectivity in its becoming and through its immanent logic*.

What we have are two *separate logics*: the logic of capital and the logic of revolution. I should say, at this point, that this is the critical point of Althusser's concept of overdetermination. As against Laclau and Mouffe's claim that he reduced every social and political relation to a determinate economic base, we

should see Althusser's definition of overdetermination as a strategic thought *on* the economic "last instance" and ask ourselves what role it plays in an overdetermined situation. As Althusser says in *Reading Capital*, it is an "absent cause."[4] Why is it absent, and why maintain it if, in the end, we are only going to disavow its manifest significance in any struggle against capital? Because it allows us to see, from the standpoint of a thought against capital, the following: the mediated trace of the last instance in an overdetermined situation. This trace removes the class struggle per se from anti-capitalist action. Why? Because class struggle, like the total structure of capitalist society, is merely an intelligible *effect*[5] of the last instance, which nonetheless remains absent. This is why Althusser describes Marx's method in the *Grundrisse* as a *theoretical* revolution: not because it initiated a brand new abstraction that separated thought from the concrete world of political action, but because the theory Marx advanced was a form of thought that methodically carried out, *in the demonstration of the political economic categories he reconceptualized*, the concept of their subversion. Marx, in other words, created a perspective against capital.

If class struggle is thinkable only as an *effect* of overdetermination, it is because it still has a place in any anti-capitalist action. What is this place? It is in the understanding that any anti-capitalist struggle is always going to be a struggle against capital's primary means of self-actualization: its creation of *surplus value*. Surplus value, on a general scale, is a *trace* of the economic base, of the concrete means of production, the conflict inherent in the forms of labor through which capital actualizes itself, *that makes its way throughout every constitutive feature of an overdetermined society*.

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[4] Louis Althusser, "Marx's Immense Theoretical Revolution," *Reading Capital* (2nd ed., Tr. Ben Brewster, New York: Verso, 1999), 188.
[5] *ibid*.

This is the true significance of the notion of ruptural unity, where Althusser draws an impassable boundary between two separate logics: on the one side is a thought from the standpoint of capital, and on the other a thought from the standpoint of the militant against capital. Althusser shifts its balance and takes the side of the latter. He accomplishes this shift by maintaining the last instance as a trace. It becomes the objective instance that *delimits the struggle against capital as the struggle against the apex concept of Marx's conceptual system: surplus value production.* But because the last instance is always *posited* by this perspective, the thought on such a struggle also posits the supercession of the class dialectic through this struggle. The ruptural unity, thought in its immanent logic, is the becoming of a collectivity that cannot be contained by this dialectic.

We have to take into account, however, the fact that the 1917 revolution was a ruptural unity against *tsarist Russia*, that it was a revolution *against the existing State*, because to think ruptural unity is to think the State-capital manifold *and its undoing*. This dual attack, as Althusser says, *is indefensible*. The reason for this indefensibility lies in the form of subjectivation accomplished in the ruptural unity: the *naming* subject (Lenin), in subjectivating him or herself and thus including him or herself in the collectivity he or she designates as such, thinks of *the possibility of militancy as the act of naming the militant.* And since this naming accompanies the designation of a collectivity in the process of its becoming, *whose possibility the thinking subject posits in order to illicit nothing less than his or her becoming, his or her own becoming-militant runs in tandem with the possibility it thinks.*

A ruptural unity arises not because the objective situation is recognized as granting legitimacy to anti-capitalist and anti-Statist action, but because the subject recognizes those points within an overdetermined situation that make it possible to overturn the entire capitalist edifice. *Ruptural unity is a completely subjective*

process: on the one hand, it takes place in and through the subject, and on the other through the collectivity that emerges as an immanence whose possibility is tied to that of the subject him or herself. Because it is not beholden to an objective situation, because it does not take place according to any recognizable logic or general law (such as the dialectic of classes in its purity), a ruptural unity allows us to think absolute negativity more concretely. To put it bluntly, because ruptural unity is a subjective process it is therefore autonomous with respect to the objectively determinable situation, freed, at the moment of the collectivity's naming, from the shackles of the State and of capital. The act of naming the militant and initiating the revolutionary sequence is itself emblematic of the negativities within the status quo, negativities that allow the subject to persist as a militant disruptor of the political, economic, and even the revolutionary consensus. *Ruptural unity is neither containable and thinkable by the logics of the State and of capital, nor by any other logic that attempts to reduce the fight against surplus value production to economic struggle—the general contradiction, the dialectic—alone.* In the end, they amount to the same thing. Absolute negativity becomes indefensible in the face of these three logics; it remains, appropriately enough, beyond the purview of their limited scope.

The method is clear: to think subjectivation as a *naming* through which both the individual subject and the collectivity becomes. This is all Marx's method, in Althusser's remarkable reading, does: it militantly thinks. We can thus derive the most *general form* of which this proposition consists and arrive at the central problem that drives this dissertation: the question of what it means to think a subject in its becoming through the force of attribution, in addition to the proper *method* required to think this subject in its becoming as a potential militancy.

Accordingly, I will advance the following thesis: that a thought on attribution, a thought that thinks attribution, *is a form of attribution itself*, one that is possible *only by thinking itself as a thought on its capacities to think militantly*. Such a thought apprehends its place within the collectivity *whose militancy it thinks qua the name*, a naming that simultaneously includes the subject, in his or her becoming, as the *negation* of the collectivity's delimitability and the *distanciator* of identity. *It is a method, a form of thought, that consists of a sequence of namings and attributions.*

The subject—the agent of attribution, the vessel of the common's immanent logic—remains, as a concept, incomplete. We have not yet seen its relationship to time. This has everything to do with the subject's recognition of possibilities. We have already done much in this regard: this entire section was essentially a passage, by way of Althusser, into the subject's revolutionary becoming against capital and the State. The objective now is to clarify the subject's constitutive features and to make its relationship to time more rigorous.

B. THE SUBJECT: F*** THE POLICE

There are two readings of Althusser's "handling" of the subject that I would like to foreground, both of which are highly distinctive in their own ways: Judith Butler's and Alain Badiou's. Both differ in their conception of the differences between, and the consequent significance of, a) the *subject*, and b) a *subjectivity*. Butler's and Badiou's respective positions on the matter can be summarized thusly:

a. The subject exists, but a subjectivity does not. Butler focuses her reading upon Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" essay, and concludes that the subject's subordination to a higher power (the Law, the State, the Church, etc.) involves the subject's *conscientiousness*, a form of recognition

through which the subject secures its existence *as a subject*, which becomes, by virtue of its recognition of "the call's" authority, ambivalent. For Butler, this is the meaning of Althusser's example of the policeman's "hailing" of the man on the street, the subjectivating force of "interpellation."[6] The subject's conscience can be said to produce a guilt that forces it to respond to the call of Power. The subject overshadows the possibility of thinking a subjectivity, which can be defined as a series of processes that constitute the subject and that allow one to think its constitution *separate* from its existence *as a subject*, which Althusser describes as the condition of "always already" *being* a subject, that is, as always already, and eternally, subordinate.[7] The difference between a subject and a subjectivity, in other words, is the following: the former is a fixed, subordinate ontology and the latter a transitive, constitutive dynamic that comprises it, prior to any fixation and identification. According to Butler, because Althusser describes ideology as the necessary precondition for the reproduction of the relations of production in capital, where subjects perform the reproduction themselves by *accepting* their interpellation as reproducers, by taking upon themselves the responsibility of reproducing the relations of production and mastering the "know-how"[8] of capitalist exploitation, "neither submission nor mastery is *performed by a subject*; the lived simultaneity of submission as mastery, and mastery as submission, is the condition of possibility for the emergence of the subject."[9] It is this lack of subjective performance that Butler ultimately sees as the impasse in Althusser's essay, and it leads her to conclude that there has to be a way to think the possibility that there is a

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[6] Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (Tr. Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 115 – 20.
[7] *ibid*, 117.
[8] *ibid*, 100 – 06.
[9] Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 117.

"potentiality that remains inexhausted by any particular interpellation," a subjectivity that emerges out of the impossible constitution of the subject who possesses "a willingness *not* to be" under the terms of Power.[10]

b. For Badiou, on the contrary, *there is subjectivity only because it is indeed possible to think against the subject*. It is important to note that Badiou arrives at this conclusion by making reference not to the ideology essay, but to a few passages from *Politics and History*, *Reading Capital*, *For Marx*, and "Lenin and Philosophy," all of which deal not with the subject per se, but *with the relation between philosophy and politics*. Quoting from an essay in *Politics and History*, "Marx's Relation to Hegel," Badiou draws upon Althusser's now well-known (and well-contested) differentiation between science and ideology: "'the concept 'process' is scientific, the notion 'subject' is ideological.' 'Subject' is not the name of a concept," Badiou continues, "but that of a notion, that is, the mark of an inexistence. There is no subject, since there are only processes."[11] For Badiou, Althusser's subject is ideological and Statist *and therefore non-existent from the standpoint of politics*: "Althusser posits that only the 'militants of the revolutionary class struggle' really grasp the thought of the process in relations [of production, political relations, ideological relations, and so on, as long as they are *material*]. Therefore, genuine thought of process is possessed by those engaged in political practice."[12] Thus, genuine thought is linked directly to a militant politics; moreover, since, as Badiou reminds us, Althusser's concern is with philosophy as a *practice*,[13] genuine thought is political inasmuch as it is "a separating activity, a thinking of the distinctions in thought [which] can draw new lines of partition, think

[10] *ibid*, 130 – 1.
[11] Alain Badiou, *Metapolitics* (Tr. Jason Barker. New York: Verso, 2005), 59.
[12] *ibid*, 60.
[13] *ibid*, 59.

new distinctions." And yet, Badiou acknowledges that "[p]hilosophy has no object. In particular, the 'political' object does not exist for it. Philosophy is an act whose effects are strictly immanent." Althusser's goal is to therefore "identify politics through its immanent effects within philosophical activity," which is possible only because both politics and philosophy possess no object: both are processes whose principle characteristic is *immanence*, philosophy's proof being the order of its logic, and that of politics' being the "processionality" of the militancy that gives it a trajectory.[14] This, for Badiou, is where *subjectivity* emerges. "It is a process of homogeneous thought in the material form of militancy, one not determined through (scientific) objectivity, nor captive to the (ideological) subject-effect."[15] Thought and politics, whose unity philosophy—Althusser's method—thinks, is tied to the processionality of a subjectivity, which Badiou equates to militant political sequences.

Both Butler and Badiou, then, acknowledge the ideological constitutivity of the subject. But their conclusions diverge, and for the following reason: Butler gives a *positive* reading of Althusser's treatment of the subject, through which she is able to see it as a positive *concept* and a thinkable "object" with an actual content worthy of determination, whereas Badiou gives a *negative* account of the subject by defining it as *empty* of any philosophical significance precisely *because* it is ideological. Neither reading, it seems, is completely incorrect. But they are not wholly correct, either. Butler eschews the philosophical question, i.e. the methodological problem, that Badiou underscores, one that, given his insistence of Marx's "immense theoretical revolution," to borrow the title of one of his essays, can be said to be one of Althusser's primary concerns. And yet, Badiou is too

[14] *ibid*, 62 – 3.
[15] *ibid*, 65.

easily dismissive of the value that the subject could have for a thought on militant politics, of the value it could have for theorizing its undoing as an ideological effect.

I want to focus on two propositions, the first from Butler and the second from Badiou. Together, they can help to demonstrate the existence of a much more complete notion of the subject vis-à-vis subjectivity than either Butler or Badiou give. They are

1. That the "bad subject" arises from a willingness to be *unconstituted*, refusing the call of interpellation and thus submitting itself to the void of non-being.
2. That the subject, as a positive ontological category *for the State*, is unthinkable for a militant politics *whose immanent logic* is concerned only with processes.

Viewed through these two propositions, Butler's and Badiou's readings do not appear incompatible: the notion of the subject's submission to non-being and an immanent logic's immersion in and harnessing of political practice can be seen as two sides of the same militant process, where the subject's primary willingness to "in-exist" is the precondition for its induction into the immanent processes of politics. But this also means that to think the subject in and as its processionality—to think the subject's overcoming by subjectivity—*is to think the subject's becoming*. This is nothing less than the function of attribution and naming, the subject's inclusion in a non-delimitable collectivity designated as the "site" of potential militancy. This turns thinking the subject's becoming into a thought on the subject *as an immanent logic of a self-constitutive force*, as the initiator of an absolute negativity whose emblem is its *non-being* towards the State and capital. The subject's constitutive procedure is thus to think itself in its becoming qua the

non-delimitable collectivity it names, which, ultimately, is a *self-voiding* procedure that disavows the State's and capital ability to subordinate and name it in their image, as it were, thus weakening their identitarian power and logic.

This recapitulates Lenin's subjectivation of the Bolshevik Revolution: against a naming from "above"—from the police, from the State, from capital (all components of the same overdetermined structure)—*a subject names itself*. It designates its within-ness in a collectivity whose becoming it has summoned by naming it. *This, and nothing more, is the power of the subjectivating force of the name and the attribute, and which the method developed by Althusser—a thought on this militancy—can think as a militant thought.*

The "bad subject" is thus subjectivity *thought as an immanent logic*. And yet, a subjectivity, because of the nature of attribution—to name a potential militancy *through the terms given by the State*, i.e. "the Filipino"—is unthinkable without acknowledging the *residue* of the subject, that still dominated thing. In other words, as against Badiou, I maintain the necessity to think the subject if we are to think the potential of militancy. This subject, however, is *bad*; it is a becoming, an immanent process, the absolute negativity of the logics of the State and of capital. In order to not undercut the terminology I have been using so far, I will hereafter maintain my use of the term "subject," which, let it be known, is always the bad subject of a becoming.

(As a side note, I also maintain that this is one way to get past some of the impasses of Badiou's philosophical snags, which, in his rigorous insistence on the need to rethink the universal for the purposes of leaving behind the relativisms and weaknesses of what he derides as postmodernist and post-structuralist philosophy and politics, tends to leave untheorized the kinds of empowering moves that arise when a group militantly organizes around an ethno-political category. As I have

been saying, however, these empowering gestures are also beset by their own limitations, a tension that merits great consideration. These tensions, without performing the kinds of maneuvers I have been making, are what remain unthinkable in Badiou's philosophy.)

We have thus come to the central concern of this chapter: the temporality of the subject. We have seen that the potential for revolution is thinkable only if a ruptural unity, the overdetermined emergence of a revolutionary collectivity designated by the designating subject, is posited from the start. For Althusser, this was a transformation of the Hegelian version of History, ruled by a single Idea. This means that a new notion of time, adequate to the subject whose theoretical determination we have performed above, is called for. For this, we have to turn to that methodological substratum of Althusser's own thinking: the *Grundrisse*.

2.2 Futurality / Marx's Method: The Presupposition, Or, Absolute-Negativity-In-Thought

Let us preface Marx by way of a debate that took place roughly twenty-five years ago concerning the problem of theorizing the transition out of capitalism: that between Norberto Bobbio and Antonio Negri. This debate was focused primarily upon the question of the State, and especially of the place of democracy, in a revolution's reversal of the production of surplus value. The difference between Bobbio and Negri can be summed up as follows:

a. For Bobbio there is quite simply no such thing as the reversal of surplus value. Instead, he opts for a thoroughgoing analysis of the possibilities of a democratized distribution of the means of production, achieved by taking apart both the concept of democracy and socialism, and in turn disclosing the paradox of the idea of a "democratic socialism:" namely, that democracy is essentially

"subversive," power flowing "upwards" and not downwards. Bobbio distinguishes this bottom-up model of politics from socialism, which for him requires the "transfer of ownership of the means of production from the hands of private individuals to the state, in other words, another institution where power flows downwards."[16] The transition towards a *democratic* socialism involves determining not only the necessary *form* that it will take—the mechanisms that would enable a *democratized distribution* of the means of production—but more importantly the *subject or agent* that will ensure these goals' actualization. Bobbio's concerns point to a single problem: that of *organization*, and in what way the concrete struggles of which it is constituted correspond, *formally speaking*, to the State-form.

b. Whereas Bobbio concludes his analyses with this impasse, in which advocating a *democratic* socialism rather than a socialism in its historical guise (presumably in the manner of the Soviet) becomes the central argument devoid, however, of what exactly the form such a democratic socialism would take *against* the institutional form of the State, Negri is more definite: for him the State's function is to preserve the *form* of the means of production, and no amount of freedom can be maintained under the conditions of State rule. This means that the form of a democratic socialism is equivalent, in its effects, to that of the State: any attempt at equitably distributing the means of production presupposes, as Bobbio acknowledges, a centralized form of power: "the application of central planning to ensure that the law of surplus value is fulfilled."[17] In this sense, socialism is a mere homology of capitalism, both of which are premised upon extracting value from wage labor, the "form of the law of value."[18] The democratic model, unwittingly or

[16] Norberto Bobbio, *Which Socialism?* (Tr. Roger Griffin. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1987), 74 – 5.
[17] Negri, "Is There A Marxist Doctrine of the State? A Reply," *ibid*, 133.
[18] Antonio Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx* (Tr. Harry Cleaver, Michael Ryan, Maurizio Viano. Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1991), 127 – 50.

not, accepts the notion that the *form* of capital carries over into socialism, its *formal* transformation to a democratic socialism being unable by definition to introduce a complete transformation in the concrete relations of production. The subjective form of organization that Bobbio calls attention to and defines as a fundamental problem is recapitulated by Negri, but with a significant difference: it is the index of a necessary revolution *in the "traditional categories" and "conceptual framework" for determining the transformation out of capitalism*.[19]

To sum up: the transition towards a democratic socialism, because of its central paradox—power on the ascent, i.e. power "from below," combined with the practical function of the state "from above"—does not solve the formal problems of capital, which, for Negri, require not only an alternative project, but an entirely new system of concepts capable of determining the organization of a true revolution against wage labor. This means producing new categories for thinking a militant subject, defined in opposition to both capital *and socialism, even a democratic one*. This militant subject, for Negri, is named Communism, and its constitutive feature is its radical *break*—both formally and substantively—with capital. This notion of the break departs from the transitionality of a democratic socialism, of both a democratic revolution and a socialist revolution, a notion that cannot help but redeploy the presumptions of that thing that Althusser repudiated: the Historical Idea. Such a break is thinkable, as Althusser knew, *only by thinking a new methodology into existence.*

It is therefore time to turn to Marx himself.

The problem of methodology involves the production of concepts, "the concrete in mind," a production that Marx called an "abstract determination," or as

[19] Negri, "Is There a Marxist Doctrine of the State? A Reply," 131 (emphasis mine).

it has been more popularly called, the "determinate abstraction," which he defined as follows in the *1857 Introduction*. It is a passage worth quoting at length:

> It seems correct to begin with the real and the concrete, with the real precondition, thus to begin, in economics, with e.g. the population, which is the foundation and the subject of the entire social act of production. However, on closer examination this proves false. The population is an abstraction if I leave out, for example, the classes of which it is composed. These classes in turn an empty phrase if I am not familiar with the elements on which they rest. E.g. wage labour, capital, etc. . . . . The concrete is concrete because it is the concentration of many determinations, hence the unity of the diverse. It appears in the process of thinking, therefore, as a process of concentration, as a result, not as a point of departure, even though it is the point of departure in reality and hence also the point of departure for observation and conception. Along the first path the full conception was evaporated to yield an abstract determination; along the second, the abstract determinations lead towards a reproduction of the concrete by way of thought. In this way Hegel fell into the illusion of conceiving the real as the product of thought concentrating itself, probing its own depths, and unfolding itself out of itself, by itself, whereas the method of rising from the abstract to the concrete is only the way in which through appropriates the concrete, reproduces it as the concrete in mind. . . . . [T]o the kind of consciousness—and this is characteristic of the philosophical consciousness—for which conceptual thinking is the real human being, and for which the conceptual world as such is thus the only

> reality, the movement of the categories appears as the real act of production—which only, unfortunately, receives a jolt from the outside—whose product is the world; and—but this is again a tautology—this is correct in so far as the concrete totality is a totality of thoughts, concrete in thought, in fact a product of thinking and comprehending; but not in any way a product of the concept which thinks and generates itself outside or above observation and conception; a product, rather, of the working-up of observation and conception into concepts.[20]

He then goes on to develop his famous thesis: "Bourgeois society is the most developed and the most complex historic organization of production. The categories which express its relations, the comprehension of its structure, thereby also allows insights into the structure and the relations of production of all the vanished social formations out of whose ruins and elements it built itself up, whose partly still unconquered remnants are carried along within it, whose mere nuances have developed explicit significance within it, etc. Human anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape."[21] The most important point of this passage is the one that Althusser himself called attention to: namely, that the "concrete in mind," i.e. the concept, and the process of abstract determination in thought, marks a profound revolution against empiricist conceptions of knowledge.[22] Let us keep this in mind as we separate the above passage into its constitutive propositions.

1. The concrete is a product of overdetermination, "the unity of the diverse." In referring to an earlier passage in the *Introduction* where Marx defines

[20] Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (Tr. Martin Nicolaus. New York: Penguin, 1993), 101.
[21] *ibid*, 105.
[22] Althusser, "From *Capital* to Marx's Philosophy," 35 – 40.

production as a "totality" of the relations of production,[23] Negri, in *Marx Beyond Marx*, defines Marx's method of conceptualization as the production in thought of the concrete "as a relation and a unity of differences."[24] The concrete thus presents itself to thought and makes itself available to conceptualization only after this thought determines these determinations and their concentration into and production of the concrete. This is a *knowledge-effect*, and what it designates in its methodological comportment to the *society-effect* is this: the *positing* of the concrete, objective conditions within the conceptual system, the unification by the objectivity posited by a thought on the overdetermined field of relations, a thought that thinks capital's continual self-actualization vis-à-vis (but not limited to) the relations of production, i.e. the *economically-based* production of surplus value. This, as I said earlier, is the general form for thinking the economic last instance as a trace that permeates an overdetermined situation and which allows the militant to think the overturning of surplus value as the sole project of a revolution against capital, in all of its actualizations.

2. The concrete cannot be thought as an empirical determination. But in no way does this mean that the concrete exists only as a product of the mind, and that the world enters the head only as a "jolt from the outside," a mere corrective or analogue to the world that the mind has produced. It is impossible to move from one extreme (empiricism) to another (idealism). This means, again, the positing of the concrete in thought *by thought*.

3. Beyond empiricism and idealism lies something else altogether, something introduced into the world vis-à-vis thought and its relations ("the relation and unity of differences") in the concrete. This is what Negri describes as the

[23] *Grundrisse*, 86.
[24] *Marx Beyond Marx*, 44.

subject of "the transformation of knowledge" of the *Grundrisse*.[25] "[T]he abstract determinations lead towards a reproduction of the concrete by way of thought:" the subject *of* the methodology (the thinking subject who deploys the method) is also a *product* of it, but only insofar as it reproduces and posits in thought the concrete. It reproduces the concrete *and its overdeterminations*, turning the *totality* into an object of knowledge and concretizing in thought capital's self-actualization. More importantly, this total view of capital also produces the thought of the revolution against it, of the categories that help to think capital's overdetermined totality and thus to make *thinking revolution possible*. This is the domain of the subject, which is capable of *inducing* a revolution by thinking and naming the collective agent *as an immanent logic of its attribution*. This is what Negri has called "communism in methodology."[26] Thus far, I have merely been restating many of the propositions I advanced earlier; with this last proposition, however, we encounter a radically new idea altogether: that such a revolution is *immanent as concrete because it is posited in the totality of overdeterminations*, that it is, that revolution is *yet another overdetermination thinkable within capital*.

4. This will be clearer if we think of this immanence as a *temporal* category. Determining and positing the concrete involves placing it along a temporal series, *but as a function of the present*: "Human anatomy contains the key to the ape." This is what Marx meant when he said that the past is the *"presupposition"*[27] of the present: "The point is not the historic position of the economic relations in the succession of different forms of society. . . . Rather, their order within bourgeois society."[28] The concrete, determined in its successive forms

[25] *ibid*, 47.
[26] *ibid*, 48.
[27] *Grundrisse*, 101 – 2 (emphasis mine).
[28] *ibid*, 107 – 8.

up to its current manifestation, needs to attain a level of *generality*. This is not a substantive generality, however; it is a *formal* one. Only in this way is the concrete determinable *in time*, its constitutive elements capable of being posited as common throughout all of the modes of production in question, from the past to the present. "The conception of labour in this general form—labour as such—is also immeasurably old. Nevertheless, when it is economically conceived in this simplicity, 'labour' is as modern a category as are the relations which create this simple abstraction."[29] "Labour as such" is the abstract form of the concrete object of the method. Reduced to its simplest form, the concept is provided with a generality that gives it both its modernity and its antiquity. The latter are the "remnants" whose relation to the former has produced the concept of labor "as such." A concept's modernity is inseparable and in fact *contiguous* with its older forms. A single concept can thus give rise to an entire historical relation conceived as a *formal* continuity, the concept unfolding itself backward in time so as to construct and *reproduce* all of History's constitutive totalities. But this is possible only if the present is conceived as containing within itself all of the past's *forms*. The principle Marxist presupposition—that capitalism contains the seeds for its own destruction—posits the present, then, *as the presupposition of a future world without capital, which must contain the present within it*.

Let us recall the third proposition: a subjectivity is capable of thinking, and in so doing naming, designating, and attributing a collectivity's revolution against capitalism, but only by reproducing it vis-à-vis thought, that is, *in the totality*, *in the overdeterminations that a subject thinks and in which it posits the concrete objective conditions for its subjectivating and immanent logic*. This is the formula that allows Marx to suggest, in the famous "Fragment on Machines" at the

[29] *ibid*, 103.

beginning of Notebook VII of the *Grundrisse*, that capitalism is leading towards a situation where not only will labor become increasingly socialized, but that "disposable time [rather than labor time, the source of value] will grow for all," marking a shift towards the reversal of capital's production of surplus value.[30] The subject I mentioned in the third proposition above is thus thinkable only in its relation to time: *it is the agent of the present's presupposition of the future*. The subject induces and names the concrete totality of a world freed from capitalism by *reproducing* this world in thought and positing it as a potentiality within the world of capital itself. *It hurls the present into the future as a function of an immanent, subjectivating logic within a collectivity.*

Using these four propositions as a foundation, I will advance the following thesis: a subject, because it presupposes the future as a constitutive moment of its thought on the overdeterminations of the present, introduces a *constitutive negativity in thought and in the subject him or herself*, thus producing the idea of an overdetermined totality marked *by a temporal emptiness posited by this subject, which has done so only insofar as a future against capital can be thought as a concrete possibility of the present*. A subject *thinks* the future *in* the present and *empties the latter of its positivity*.

This is what I will term the *futurality* constitutive of a politics against capital and the State. It is *the temporal dimension of an immanent, subjectivating logic of a collectivity that a subject names and designates.* This returns us to the problems advanced in the concluding section of Chapter 1: namely, the problem posed by the attribute, the emblem of absolute negativity, one thinkable, nonetheless, only by being submitted (however partially) to the logic of the State. This is the characteristic tension of the name and attribute "Filipino." This is also the problem

[30] *ibid*, 708.

of what I called the *residue* of the subject (subordinate to the call of the police, of the State, and of capital) *within a transitive subjectivity*. We must therefore offer up the following proposition as a supplement to the previous four:

5. What might be called the subject-subjectivity duality—i.e. the tensions inherent to the namer and attributer of a collectivity—exceeds the Historical Idea and Historical Necessity (those two categories derided by Althusser) *by thinking them as preconditions for a thought, in the present—still subject to capital—of a life beyond capitalism*. The fourth proposition showed that such a thought, as an immanent, subjectivating logic, is temporal, but because this logic thinks the present in terms of the futurality of an anti-capitalist and anti-Statist politics, and effectively posits its potential in the here and now, this temporality cannot be conceived as a sequential division of past, present, and future. If Necessity names such a logic, then an immanent subjectivation of the future in the present designates a break *in the present*, a rupture in time.

But is it really possible to think futurality without in some way recapitulating at least something of Necessity, e.g. *the transition*? The transition signals the movement from one mode of production to the next, but if repudiating Necessity also means repudiating the transition, it seems as though any thought on a potential life beyond capital is foreclosed from the start. We seem to have missed something, and for the following reason: thus far, we have failed to theorize the relationship between a thought *on* a radical rupture with capital and a thought *constituted by* such a rupture.

As Marx showed, the method of following a determinate abstraction through its implications is primarily a question of *form*. In the fourth proposition, I mentioned that the concept of the presupposition is successful inasmuch as the present is thought to contain all of the past's forms. If Marx's method was to think

the potential of Communism, in its futurality, then this means that the present must be thought *as the past of a future whose potential is posited now, a futurality thinkable in terms of the formal unity of the present and the future*. Inasmuch as this thought thinks by disrupting the apodictic movement of time from one point to the next—positing as it does the yet-to-be of Communism as a potential of the present, as an immanence *that can be subjectivated and is therefore thinkable as an actual presence*—it still remains tied to the logic of the transition as a *formal* category: it is what allows us to think past capital. The formal unity of present and future, of past and present, makes it possible to think *immanence*, of its passage from a latent potential of the present to the presupposed, explosive disruption of capital. This describes the thought *on* a radical rupture with capital. What, then, comprises a thought *constituted by* this rupture?

Such a thought, because it *posits* the presupposition as a concrete thing and thus thinks—i.e. names—the existence of futurality, *constitutes itself* in its immanent, subjectivating logic *by thinking itself as inhabiting the rupture as its namer, designator, and attributor*. A subject is the advent of the rupture, whose thought on the rupture turns around and constitutes this subject and sends it into the absolute negativity of the present it has just summoned. This is what I mean when by a subject's becoming, whose passage is lit by the black light of non-being; it hurtles itself into the absolute negativity of its own ontology by the process of attribution, through which it becomes qua the becoming of a collectivity whose delimitation it abolishes, and vice versa. This becoming is the emblem of what Negri named Communism, of the subject's immanent militancy.

We therefore have the unity of two categories: the *form* of time, and *the substance* of time. The former is the framework in which a rupture is thinkable, and the latter the subjectivating logic that thinks qua the rupture. But insofar as the

form of time allows a transition beyond capital to be thinkable, the means by which such a movement-beyond happens is in no way containable by the transition conceived as a concrete process, as a concrete organization that both induces and is included within a transformation beyond capitalism, the main point of contention between Bobbio and Negri. The substantive organization against capital is an immanent subjectivation, whose logic concretizes this immanence *against the transition*, against the unitary flow from past, to present, to future. It *introduces into the present* the absolute negativity of the future: Communism.

When what is at stake is the question of a revolution against and beyond capital, there is *a necessary separation between time's form and its substance*. It is therefore imperative that we maintain two apparently incommensurable categories of time: that of the transition and that of the break. With this in mind, we can return to the debate between Bobbio and Negri concerning the State. Because of the logic of *the separation*, it is impossible to think the transformation of capital according to the *formal aspects of the transition alone*. If we follow the presuppositional method, and think what it would mean to adopt the transition as a formal model that doubles itself as a *substantive description* of the proper course of events, the following happens: the commonalities that are said to belong to all of the modes of production (here, capitalist to post-capitalist) and which constitute the present's presupposition, *if they are defined as in fact determinative of the substantive mode of organization and transformation*, would produce nothing more than a homology between capitalism and that post-capitalist, transitional phase, or in other words, socialism. This is the homology that Negri critiques.

The fifth proposition, *by separating time's form from its substance*, says that form is deployable as the framework for thinking the present's presupposition of the future, which enables this thought to *posit* the existence of futurality in the present.

This positing in its turn disengages the substantive mode of organization—as a function of an immanent, subjectivating logic—from the present, introducing into the latter an absolute negativity that, *although it is intelligible there, in no way belongs to it*. It is intelligible *through the force of a thought that acts as the immanent subjectivation of revolution*. This removes the possibility of thinking that a transformation out of capitalism could take place by reorganizing its relations of production into a more democratic model. Rather, this logic posits revolution *as the negation of capital altogether*, and not a compromise with its terms, a meager reorganization that does nothing more than democratically distribute the ownership of the means of production, to use that old phrase, rather than negating it altogether. As Negri says, this break or separation is a function of the revolutionary method that Marx created in the *Grundrisse*, which produced a method from the *perspective* of the "subjectivizing" processes within, but not belonging to, capital: the force of Communism.[31]

2.3 Futurality and the Diaspora

We are led, if we are to think of subjectivation as the key to a becoming-Filipino on an immanent diaspora, to the following conclusion: that the name Filipino can only be thought when submitted to the force of futurality. Futurality, in this regard, has everything to do with the erosion of that which Filipino subjectivity is constituted. In Chapter 1, I said that the Filipino is unthinkable without acknowledging its simultaneous acceptance and repudiation of the terms set forth within the axiomatic production, qua the Philippine State and American

[31] Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx*, esp. 151 – 69.

imperialism, of the Filipino. I proposed a number of theoretico-political coordinates for thinking the militancy inherent to this becoming:

a. The diaspora must be thought in its immanence, and the Philippines as *logically diasporized*.

b. An immanent diaspora and a diasporized Philippines, the relation between which I described as "the common," rejects the "normal" model of diasporic nationalism, where a liberated Philippine nation becomes the locus of identification for a politicized diasporic Filipino.

c. The common, as a function of a subjectivity's perspective on itself in common, is a new political ontology where the absolute negativity of the Philippine State, conceived as the historical outcome of axiomatic Filipinization, is manifest, and which in its turn manifests the *global* repudiation of this Filipinization against both the State and Empire.

d. A subjectivity's thought on the immanent diaspora as repudiation of the form of politics legislated by the State is possible only by thinking its continuous attribution of the Filipino as the name of this repudiation, one that expresses the common as a solidarity-in-erosion inasmuch as the Filipino is indeed precarious because of what attribution *does*: undermine the historical and contemporary stability of the term Filipino itself, *which always names the ontological product of the State and of Empire*.

When refined through the conclusions reached in this chapter, these propositions take on added complexity. To think futurality without accepting the formal coordinates of the transition points towards the exceedance of time's form by the substantive mode of organization that makes the transformation out of capital possible. From the perspective of the Filipino diaspora, these two conclusions—1) that of the subject's immanence qua the constellational diaspora, and 2) the

temporality that separates the form and substance of revolution—is a *logical equivalence*. It concretizes *the relation between the State and capital: in the face of an immanent, subjectivating logic*, both are the ontological *forms* through which militancy is thinkable *and nameable* but, ultimately, *uncontainable*.

The immanent, subjectivating logic that thinks the diaspora in its immanence thinks attribution *in its erosion* just as it thinks the transition *in its explosion*—the ruptural unity. Such a becoming takes place as an *abolition of time's apodicticity: the immanent diaspora manifests the repudiation of the State and Empire because it also manifests the rejection of any strict organizational principle around class alone and expresses the enfolding of an axiomatic Filipinization and the reproduction of surplus value.* Thinking the unity of becoming and time's dissolution is thus a thought on the ruptural unity of the Filipino diaspora, *against the transition legislated by the axiomatics of the State and Empire, against the passage through anything that involves a simple reorganization of capitalist principles in favor of the destruction of surplus value production in general*.

It is up to the next chapter to supply the demonstration of how this thought is thinkable *concretely*—that is, in the *contemporary* global form through which axiomatization and the reproduction of surplus value happens, and into which an immanent Filipino diaspora deposits absolute negativity: *neoliberalism*. That chapter will demonstrate just what thinking the function of militancy means in the diaspora.

CHAPTER 3
THINKING AGAINST HISTORY

"Perhaps the worst consequence of WWII is that it kept alive the idea that war could be just."
——Howard Zinn, "Just and Unjust War"

". . . the enemy today . . . is called Democracy."
——Alain Badiou, *Metapolitics*

If the preceding chapter was about thinking the future, in a process I called a thought on futurality, then the present one will provide a historical basis for this thought. I will trace the paths of a thought on the *historicity* of what a militant diasporic Filipino must, in my estimation, inescapably face today: neoliberalism. I will be making, in this chapter, a rather polemical argument. Taking as my conceptual starting point the remarks I made in Chapter 1 concerning democracy and revolutionary action, my contention is this: that the conflicts endemic to democratic action require one to think, as Lenin admonishes, the potential separations between the form and content of democratic societies. *Formal equality*, as Lenin said, is the shell for capitalism; today, as neoliberalism spreads across the globe and digs deeper into once autonomous regions, this formal equality has sufficed to justify military, economic, and political conquest and domination. Democracy, conceived in its formal qualities, becomes the *name* for freedom. It is against this notion of democracy that I will make my claims on the historicity that the militant is today enmeshed.

This chapter's analyses will proceed by way of the following operations:

1. A *genealogical* determination (i.e. a diachronic exposition) of the present situation, in which we find ourselves confronting the twin forces of neoliberal

capitalism and democracy. These are imperialism's contemporary manifestations. It is my thesis that the foundation for this imperialism was laid at the end of World War II, the global restructuring of the political and economic spheres taking place alongside the creation of what was to become what Richard Peet has termed the U.S.-led "unholy trinity" of the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO.

2. An *archaeological* delimitation (i.e. a synchronic conceptualization) of the problem that thinking this foundation poses with respect to late twentieth century Filipino history. I will critique the presuppositions made by Filipino and Filipino American scholars and Filipino and American revolutionaries—namely, Teodoro Agoncillo and Socialist and Communist leaders Pedro Abad Santos, James S. Allen, and Amado Guerrero (aka José Ma. Sison). I am concerned with the *knowledge* these writers produce when they attempt to grapple with the predicament faced by the Philippines during World War II: namely, the question of the Japanese occupation and the problem of combating fascism in the name of democracy and anti-imperial liberation. Despite the differences in their conclusions, these writers analyses betray, in the conclusions they reach, a shared presupposition: that fascism and democracy are easily identifiable as opposing political and economic ideologies and processes, that they are *analytical positivities* capable of being opposed to each other for the purposes of understanding both Filipino history and the legacy of World War II. This presupposition has a tremendous effect on how Philippine liberation has been imagined; it has displaced, however implicitly or otherwise (and some quite explicitly and purposefully, as in Agoncillo's case), any thought on how the conflation of Empire and democracy have been and are being conflated, in both political and economic terms, a conflation that has been the primary feature of geopolitics since the end of the second world war.

Let us now proceed to the diachronic axis of this problem.

3.1 AN UNHOLY DAWN

A. BRETTON WOODS AND BEYOND

This section will give an overview of Richard Peet's main arguments on the inception and subsequent mutations of the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO. His *Unholy Trinity*, in my opinion, is the most comprehensive and succinct guide to the three organizations' histories vis-à-vis American hegemony.

The IMF, World Bank, and WTO's present manifestation are outcomes of a half-century long process that has consisted of a) continuing and transforming a legacy of capitalist ideology traceable to Adam Smith and classical liberal economic theory, and b) a mutation in this legacy itself, capitalist planners and bureaucrats attempting to respond to a number of economic crises plaguing capitalism throughout the twentieth century. These legacies and mutations can be elaborated more completely as follows:

a. Adam Smith's theory of capitalism's "rationality," its "invisible hand," with the individual entrepreneur and the market acting as "self-regulating" agents. Thus was liberal economic theory born: as a reaction against the authority of the British landowning nobility and the monarchical state, which throughout 18th century regulated the British market through divine right and feudal loyalties. Classical liberal theory upheld the notion of "natural liberty," which "implied free competition, free movement of workers, free shifts of capital, and freedom from government intervention."[1] What it advocated was thus a relative

[1] Richard Peet, *Unholy Trinity: The IMF, the World Bank and WTO* (2nd ed. New York: Zed, 2004), 4 – 5.

dissociation between the economy and politics, between the market and the State.

b. The First World War, the global Depression of 1929, and the suspension of the gold standard. Prior to the war, the international economic system established by the major Western countries was based upon classical liberalism, currencies freely convertible to gold and thus freely exchangeable between each nation. But at the onset of war, the gold standard was suspended: the Western governments imposed strict controls over their national economies. In the war's aftermath, with state treasuries still burdened by the costs of the war, countries began to pull away from the international system to protect their domestic economies, attempting first to revert to the gold standard (which failed as a stabilizing measure), and then resorting to printing inconvertible paper monies, thus depreciating national currencies worldwide. Inflation and underemployment ensued, and gave way to the massive global devaluation of basic items and commodities (such as foodstuffs), which ultimately lead to the Depression of 1929.[2]

c. The Keynesian response to both the Depression and World War II. According to Keynesian theory, depressions can be countered by a single thing: real investment, the impetus for which is the State's intervention in the economy. This lowered interest rates, thus making the ratio between expected profits and interest rates more attractive to investors, who "bought machines, providing income to machine-builders (companies and employees) who, in turn, spent money, further increasing national income, with the 'multiplier effect' (the degree of economic expansion

[2] *ibid*, 29 – 30.

induced by an investment) varying with the proportion of additional income that was spent rather than saved, and so on."[3] In addition, World War II's requirement of mass-produced weaponry had the effect of *unifying the economy and politics*. The latter's immediate objectives necessitated the State's regulation of industrial production, thus fueling the national economy and bringing together what classical liberal theory had dissociated.[4]

d. This, according to Peet, provided the means for Bretton Woods' success. With Britain's economic and political hegemony having eroded after the first World War, and with much of Western and Eastern Europe, in addition to Japan, in economic and political ruin, the only major capitalist country left to assume the role of hegemon during the post-war rebuilding period was the U.S. The collapse of the major economies required States to intervene in resuscitating their domestic industries; and yet, repudiating an international, supra-State mode of economic stabilization was impossible as well: "Western democracies had to 'resolve the clash between domestic autonomy and international stability.'"[5]

Needless to say, a series of radical fluctuations in the economic and political domains of the Western capitalist States took place between the liberal period of the late nineteenth century and the years following the second world war. The IMF and the World Bank, initially called the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), embodied the cumulative effect of these fluctuations: they were to function as the economic bulwarks for the resuscitation of the capitalist

[3] *ibid*, 34 – 5.
[4] *ibid*, 32.
[5] *ibid*, 36.

countries torn apart by the war, ensuring and overseeing the floating of exchange rates so that any country (theoretically speaking) that needed to restructure its domestic economy could do so and borrow from either institution without significantly affecting the currency value of any other country.

Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, however, the two institutions, combined with what would eventually, in 2002, become the WTO, would diverge from these objectives. Inherent to the structure of both the IMF and World Bank was, and has been, the unequal economic advantage given to States with the most capital, which, throughout much of the latter half of the twentieth century, has been the U.S.: not only is voting power in the Fund determined by the State with the most capital invested; the Bank itself is primarily a U.S. creation whose bonds were sold on Wall Street in U.S. dollars for the first ten years of its operation.[6] The imperial designs laid by the U.S. since the turn of the twentieth century in Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Guam, Samoa, etc., and which intensified and expanded over the course of the post-war period to Korea, Vietnam, South America, and Iraq, pose a considerable challenge to the *economic* resolution promised by the establishment of the IMF and World Bank.

My thesis is this: that the politico-military machines unleashed by the American State at the latter half of the twentieth century have been enabled by the *failure of this resolution between the economy and politics*. This is a failure that the IMF and World Bank contain as their *key, constitutive features*—they necessitate the impossible resolution of "the clash between domestic autonomy and international stability." This is why protesters, activists, and revolutionaries across the world have denounced the IMF and World Bank as imperial organizations. Domestic autonomy, in the end, is merely a euphemism for the ability of the

[6] *ibid*, 113.

Western capitalist States, and especially the U.S., to exert its authority and influence over the activities of both institutions. To call the conflict between domestic autonomy and international stability a "clash" is thus, in a way, misleading. Though very real, this conflict is a necessary component of the very lives, so to speak, of the IMF and the World Bank: they were set up, from the beginning, to benefit an American Empire whose rise was ensured by the devastation wrought upon the major capitalist States during the second world war. Although the conflict between the economic and politic situations was felt "at home" in the U.S., the question of resolving the division between the two domains is negligible when we consider the importance this conflict plays in the functioning of American imperialism.

Formally speaking, the IMF and World Bank were designed to create an equal economic field in which nations could theoretically enrich their economies; but because protecting domestic economies, especially during the Cold War period, meant protecting political ideals (democratic versus communist), this *formal* equality also entailed *a single global system that required a unified economy articulated to a single political system*, thus unifying economics and politics. The unequal power granted to the Western capitalist States by the IMF and World Bank have thus been crucial, during the late twentieth century and the early twenty first, and especially over the last thirty years, to the advancement of neoliberal capitalism and its political counterpart: electoral democracy.

B. DEMOCRACY ≠ FREEDOM

David Harvey describes neoliberalism in this way: it is "in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within

an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade."[7] The State is the protector of these rights; it guarantees the "quality and integrity of money" and sets up "those military, defence, police, and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets."[8] Harvey locates the roots of neoliberalism in the shifts in economic policies that Great Britain, the U.S., and China underwent in 1979 under the authority of their respective economic and political leaders: Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan, Paul Volcker, and Deng Xiaoping. They, for Harvey, hastened the move towards neoliberalism by embracing an "ethic" of market exchange in a radically deregulated global political economy, an ethic that guides "all human action" and determines the proper distribution of rights and the protection and defense of "the social good."[9]

In what follows, I will elaborate on what the social good means and what its defense entails, and in the process will clarify its importance to this dissertation.

(i) Ethics and Democratic Right. Neoliberalism becomes an ethic in itself; it systematically engenders the concepts of right and wrong, claiming for itself the authority to determine justice and the meanings of freedom and liberty. The subsumption of every dimension of human action into the notion of right constituted by and constitutive of a free market, free trade, the protection of private property, and the ideals of social welfare and the common good has meant that humanity itself has become unthinkable without simultaneously thinking of a highly specific notion of right: that of the rights of a particular freedom guaranteed by the cooperative forces of neoliberal accumulation and electoral democratic governance.

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[7] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2.
[8] *ibid*.
[9] *ibid*, 3.

At this particular juncture, I will advance the following thesis, which will guide the political and polemical trajectories of my arguments: namely, that this notion of freedom is rooted *not* in the political economic transformations of the late 1970s, but in much earlier—though by no means distant—events. The originary moment of what may be termed today's *neoliberal-imperial ethic* is *World War II*, whose ideological effects and socio-political traces affect *the thinkability of the idea of rights themselves.* More specifically, the originary moment of this ethic is the advent of U.S. imperialism's particular manifestation in the aftermath of the war. We will see, a little later, how this form of power, a conflation of imperialism, justice, and freedom, has been able to displace any thought and critique of American imperialism when we read the works of Teodoro Agoncillo, Amado Guerrero, and James Allen and their theories of America's role in the Philippines during World War II.

For now, let me emphasize the following: that this ethic has as its vehicle a concept of right that has been capable, as Harvey says, of "substituting [itself] for all previously held ethical beliefs."[10] This concept, as can be guessed, is *democracy*, the kind of formal democracy whose rise Lenin's revolution aimed to prevent. This democracy is a political, economic, social, and cultural *ideal*. But it is also a *process* that consists of advancing humanity's ability to pursue, participate in, and enjoy these ideals (development, modernization, deregulation, etc.). Democracy is both a set of values and a politics within which these values are realized. It is this relationship between value and process, or what may called *valuation-as-process*, that I am concerned with, for it produces the idea that democratic right, which is ultimately equated with the Good, is limitless. This limitlessness is both conceptual and geographical because a) apologists of

[10] *ibid*.

neoliberalism, globalization, and American power cannot imagine anything better (we are after all at the so-called end of History), and b) such an ethic does not and *should not* respect national, ethnic, and cultural boundaries.

(ii) Necessary War, Just War, Infinite War. This is where we begin to see, from the perspective of imperialism, the intimacies between economics and politics. Conceptual and geographical limitlessness turns the neoliberal ethic into a priority that supercedes every other consideration, whether it be the law or the autonomy and sovereignty of nations. As Jacques Rancière says, this priority is to be taken literally: it is *prior* to everything. It means that neoliberalism has total *precedence*, invoking, *before* all laws, boundaries, jurisdictions, and limitations, the most abstract concept in today's political economic ethic: *the human*, the universal subject that unites every political economic individual. An ethics based upon this abstract humanity operates as *a limitless process* because this ethic requires those with political, economic, and military power to demonstrate their humanitarianism. In other words, this ethic requires "human interference."[11] The ethical concept of humanity, by preceding all other codifications, is the concept of a humanity that needs to be defended, *whose prior-ness with respect to all purported codes and meanings must always have to be maintained and secured*. Democracy requires a humanitarianism that produces the concept of an abstract humanity upon which the limitlessness of its valuation-as-process can work, encoding that which is said to be prior to all codes and in so doing subsuming it *as human* into the limitless, universal code of democratic freedom. This encoding turns the human into the linchpin of any thought on freedom, which turns the *value* of liberty into the ethic and goal of neoliberal democracy. Once the human, as the object to be defended by the rights

[11] Jacques Rancière, "Prisoners of the Infinite: Guantanamo, Justice, and Bushspeak." Tr. Norman Madarasz. *Counter Punch*. 30 April 2002. <http://www.counterpunch.org/ranciere0430.html>.

this ethic advances, is thought to have priority over everything, the foundations for neoliberalism's attack have been laid: it hijacks the very definition of humanity for its own purposes. Abstracted thusly, humanity assumes a limitlessness that can only be conceived vis-à-vis neoliberalism. As an ethic, neoliberalism creates the idea that humanity's limitlessness is realizable—*precisely because this limitlessness, which is the limitlessness of freedom and liberty, is humanity's one and true potential and thus its inviolable right.*

It is not difficult—indeed, it is inevitable—to pass from this notion of democratic right to the idea that anything that impedes neoliberalism, as the final Good, is ultimately Evil. This Evil, however, is in its turn thought as equal in its abstractness and limitlessness as the humanity that is its apparent prey, inversely proportional to the Good that nurtures and protects it. It has been called a variety of things: in the fifties, sixties, seventies, and eighties, it was Communism; in the late nineties and early twenty-first century, it was and is Terrorism. Manifest Evil, these names designate an equally diverse generality that is nonetheless identifiable: they serve to designate the identities and activities of groups of people determined to crush every freedom, whether economic (capitalism) or socio-political (democracy). Alain Badiou has made a now notorious critique of this binary. He has suggested, quite rightly, that a humanity that pits itself against Evil, a humanity that is the abstract political category of the neoliberal ethic, when diverted from its *potential* (its actualization and embodiment of Democratic Right), is "worth little more" than this: as the potential *victim* of this Evil.[12] When the neoliberal-imperial ethic guides "interventions" (deposing dictators in Guatemala or Iraq, countering "terrorists" in Afghanistan or the Philippines, devaluing currencies in Indonesia or Argentina), it

[12] Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (Tr. Peter Hallward. New York: Verso, 2002), 11.

does so in the name of the humanitarian principles that support it, on behalf of what it perceives and actually *precipitates* as the victim of an absolute and infinite Evil. For both Rancière and Badiou, this describes the conceptual apparatus through which waging a "humane war"—a limitless war in the name of freedom, a protracted battle against the ultimate Evil that is Terror in the consensual language of neoliberal politics today—is not only possible, but *necessary*.[13]

This is the moment when democracy's constitutive valuation-as-process enters the field. The neoliberal ethic that holds this democracy together is justified from the start: by purportedly preceding all codes, it incorporates and subsumes every other value so that they become thinkable only in its terms and solely within the horizons of a justice, a freedom, and an equality that are redefined and created by the manifest force of this ethic. By concerning itself with the protection of the human and his or her absolute right to exist, to consume, and to produce, this ethic sees itself as waging a war that is nothing if not humane because it is also, in its means and in its outcome, entirely just.

(iii) Neoliberalism in the Philippines. These have severe consequences for a place like the Philippines. I will limit my discussion to three significant areas of State-formation and their relation to neoliberalism and Empire:

1. Although the shifts in capitalist production I outlined earlier have transformed the nature of capitalist investment in the Philippines, in addition to the legal and political channels through which cheap Filipino labor is reproduced, the purpose of the U.S.' presence in the country has always been to secure it as a strategic political economic base. This was achieved, in the years before World War II, by delaying the granting of the Philippines' nominal independence, a delay that meant that low trade barriers and export tariffs for American investors could be

[13] See Rancière, "Prisoners of the Infinite;" and Badiou, *Ethics*, 11 – 17.

implemented, which was thus conducive to the free flow of capital, labor, and goods between the U.S. and the Philippines. This delay granted Philippine labor free access to migratory circuits, having no restrictions, as American nationals, to entering the U.S. In the contemporary era, the IMF, World Bank, and WTO have taken over as managers of this trade route: trade liberalization decreases tariff rates and multilateralizes the privatization of industries, and WTO agreements, like the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) and the Trade-Related Investment Measures (TRIMs), "balances out" (i.e. democratizes) local economies by aligning them with the global market. This creates a steady supply of surplus labor for the export processing zones in the Philippines and for work abroad in Europe, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and the U.S. Financial planners and IMF, World Bank, and WTO liaisons from the Philippines remain tied to neoliberal economic theory, maintaining a Philippine State in accord with a market economy that continually channels capital from the country, thereby placing it in deeper debt, as the story goes for hundreds of other nations, so that it can be reproduced as a) a major supplier of cheap labor, and b) a lucrative site for transnational production and the extraction of national resources.

2. One way this has been achieved at a discreet level is the U.S.' support of local militias. These militias were used by local bosses in the caciques of the early years of American rule to patrol the peasantry, and are still strong today: before, it was called the Philippine Constabulary, and today, trained by the American military under the terms of the Multilateral Assistance Initiative (MAI), there are the Civilian Armed Forces Ground Units (CAFGU). The "insurgent" and "unruly" populations require direct military intervention and surveillance, so that anyone from anarchists, militant farmers, communist rebels, labor organizers, and human rights activists can be labeled, or *axiomatized*, as I termed it, anti-Statist and

therefore inimical to the proper functioning of not only neoliberal capital, but of Philippine democracy itself.

3. These "insurgent" and "unruly" populations—those critical of the Philippine State and its alliances with the U.S., of the continual constitution of the Philippine State qua the Filipino axiomatic and its political, economic, and military manifestations, and of the axiomatic's violent disciplining and production of proper State subjects (i.e. capitalists, or appendages thereof, and democrats, or embodiments of its ideals and servants of its processes)—can find their most extreme counterparts in the contemporary clashes over Mindanaoan sovereignty. Here, the axiom of Terror has been deployed against the Moro rebels in order to consolidate State rule, itself enforced by a tremendous amount of firepower. One year after U.S. troops were deployed *en masse* to the Philippines, through the sanction of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) and as part of the Bush administration's infinite war on terror, the Philippines received $30 million in military aid from the U.S. as part of a bilateral counterterrorism agreement, in addition to another $30 million devoted to "assisting" the "peace process" in Mindanao alone.[14] This "pacification," however, is only a part of a more protracted process: much of the weapons being used to quell the rebellions today (2006) were sold to the Philippines during the Clinton administration. Between 1992 and 1998, the latter *gave* the Philippine State 3,638 M-14 rifles, 16,488 Colt M-1911 pistols, 10 M-240 machine guns, 22,500 Colt M-16A1 automatic rifles, two refurbished Lockheed Martin transport planes, and, through a $13.8 million deal brokered between the Philippine State and Textron Marine and Land Systems (a division of Textron, Inc., a defense contractor specializing in manufacturing attack

[14] The White House, "Fact Sheet: Announcements Related to the Visit of President Arroyo."

helicopters), 12 Commando V-300 personnel carriers and 12 V-300 infantry fighting vehicles.[15]

This brief archaeology of neoliberal accumulation and politics in the Philippines serves to highlight one thing: that if neoliberalism, contrary to classical liberalism, advocates a *relative* dissociation between economics and politics, between the market and the State, this relativism is intensified when Empire is seen as the central form of power, as *the* organizer, discipliner, and police force of both a neoliberal economy and a democratic world. That the politico-military machines unleashed by the American State at the latter half of the twentieth century have been enabled by the failure of the resolution between the economic and the political, a failure that the IMF and World Bank contain in themselves as the impossible resolution of "the clash between domestic autonomy and international stability" and which is characteristic of the Western capitalist States, and especially of the U.S.—the thesis I advanced earlier—is here disclosed for what it is: an American-led ethic that determines both the definitions of Good and Evil and the means by which the former is to be upheld, protected, and secured and the latter destroyed, "pacified," and contained. It is a *political* ethic that, articulated to the domain of neoliberal *economics*, finds it expression *as the accumulation of capital through politico-military aggression*.

This is precisely the *overdetermined structure of relations* of which the neoliberal ethic consists. This structure of relations, moreover, ends up *overdetermining the concept of democracy itself*. The originary moment of this overdetermined structure of relations and their overarching concept (democracy), in which the articulations between the political, economic, and military were manifest

[15] Mother Jones, "Arming an Old Colony." <http://www.motherjones.com/news/special_reports/arms/philippines.html>.

in their earliest stages, was World War II, and more specifically, America's "identity" as political, economic, and military "victor." These, then, are the overdeterminations that must be kept alive in any thought that attempts to grapple with the question of the potential politics of the Filipino diaspora, of the militant Filipino diasporic subject whose thinkability *is premised upon acknowledging and, more importantly, concretizing itself through these overdeterminations*.

This is what I described in the previous chapter as the continual production in thought of the concept of capital's self-actualization. Thinking the possibility of militancy against surplus value production is the same thing as naming the militant whose possibility the thinking subject posits in order to illicit the concept of the militant's becoming. This time, capital's self-actualization is explicitly articulated to two other processes: 1) the constitution of the Philippine State qua the axiomatic, and 2) the self-actualization and enforcement of the neoliberal ethic, i.e. the unity of the political and military arms of formal democracy with the form of capital accumulation specific to the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries—neoliberalism.

C. Towards an Immanent Logic of the Past

Thus ends our genealogical exposition. We are now in a better position to understand why, in Chapter 2, I said that any becoming-militant is not limited to the economic domain alone, why it exceeds the general dialectic between the classes. Such a becoming-militant, in its attack upon capital and the State, must strike at the ideologico-ethical heart of its manifest power: formal democracy itself. The State-capital articulation I presented in Chapter 2, it must be said, and given the conclusions reached in the present one thus far, *cannot be thought without democracy, the ideal that upholds them and the process by which they become,*

though military aggression, manifest: the State, capital, and democracy are unthinkable except as each other's counterparts, united through and as imperial violence. This imperial violence, moreover, is what comprises the concrete actualization and enforcement of the axiomatic production of Filipino identities—as State-imperial subjects who are reproduced in order that they can in turn work for and towards the reproduction of the State's and Empire's economic, political, and military objectives, and who are otherwise, if determined to be "improper," the objects of aggression, war, and violence. We have thus expanded and refined the conclusions reached in Chapter 1 by giving them their general form, by providing them with their *concept* qua the positing of the overdeterminations of the neoliberal ethic.

Let us bear this in mind: these overdeterminations constitute what may be called a primary and *general* site for a contemporary democratic *subject*. We will see shortly just what constitutes a second and more specific version of this subject, one that occupies an explicitly anti-imperialist position that nonetheless harbors the same presuppositions as any other (whether rightist, pro-imperial, etc.).

Thinking the militant diasporic subject will be based upon the following procedures:

——positing what I will term its *ontological incommensurability* to the production of surplus value, the State, and their enforced actualization and reconstitution by military aggression (both in the form of "large scale" State-imperial intervention and localized militia units)—or in other words, *its ontological incommensurability to the very overdeterminations constitutive of the neoliberal-imperial ethos and its valuation-as-process—democracy*;

> ——positing, through this ontological incommensurability, the militant subjectivity's *name*, which ultimately means *positing its subject-hood*, its unthinkability from within the conventional terms of politics, its manifestation of an ontology incommensurate to the knowledges given by the political and economic status quo, or what Badiou has called "State knowledge."[16]

Positing a subject against State knowledge means thinking this subject in its becoming; it involves positing the potential of this subject. It requires, in other words, giving it a name. Naming this militant against the axiomatic production of the Filipino is a thought on a becoming-Filipino that, in order to think against this axiomatization, must also think the overdeterminations of the neoliberal ethic, of democracy as valuation-as-process.

It is therefore critical that the idea of democracy be placed under scrutiny, especially when it is used by radicals and militants as the basis (ethical or otherwise) for a project that explicitly declares itself to be anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist. This is not the place to embark upon a lengthy disquisition on the histories and pitfalls of democracy; however, the preceding analyses of the difficulties of the term, in its formal guise, should point to the problems that confront anyone who wishes to suggest that democracy is an ethic that points, ultimately, to a more equal distribution of goods, that it is a right that every living human being deserves. Let it suffice that when I criticize democracy, it is the formal democracy that Lenin described as the "best political shell for capitalism," a formal equality that is by all means irreducible to the substantive equality that this formalism can only name.

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[16] See Badiou, *Being and Event*, Meditation 28 and 31, 286 – 94; 344 – 54.

The most significant problem that historians of the Philippines face is precisely that of this impasse: that the dialectic between Good and Evil, represented in the second world war as that between democracy and fascism, can be used as the framework to understand the Philippines' pre-war, wartime, and post-war political economic situation. The democracy-fascism binary is key to the consensus' understanding of the most pressing critical and political problem of the war: the U.S.' return to the Philippines as the country's savior from the fascism of the Japanese. We will see to what extent accepting this binary displaces the problem of Empire and the genealogy of the neoliberal ethic that accompanies it.

Any thought on the constitution of a militant Filipino diasporic subject must thus think of an ontological position that exceeds the limitations of the democracy-fascism binary. It means rethinking the U.S.' return altogether. What follows will present the *archaeological* coordinates for such a thought.

3.2 Unfaithful to History

A. Freedom on the Beaches

Of the more mainstream opinions of what was at stake in America's return to the Philippines, let the following stand as the clearest expression of the idea of its benevolence and absolute necessity, the cooperation between Filipino guerillas and U.S. forces acting as a sign of the ineluctable dependency (with a heavy advantage given to the U.S.) that solidified the relationship between the two countries:

> Particularizing the American return to the Philippines in 1944 – 1945, it can be said that the guerillas made MacArthur's task easier and less costly than it would otherwise have been had the resistance

> fighters elected to remain indifferent to the American invasion forces or chosen to continue fighting one another to death. . . . It is difficult to assess in material terms the contribution of the guerillas to the winning of the war in the Pacific. It is certain, however, that without their support and fanatical loyalty the American invasion forces would have suffered serious losses in men and matériel.

This statement was made by famous Filipino historian Teodoro Agoncillo. He continues: "On the Filipino side, the resistance movement definitely kept alive the faith in America and in the way of life she showed the Filipinos in her forty years as an understanding tutor. . . . America's 'experiment in the Orient' was a success beyond even great expectations, and her colonial policy, which underscored humane attitude, gave the Filipinos reason to remain faithful to her. The war in the Pacific, then, tested the validity of America's experiment, and the result justified that policy."[17] The message is clear enough: given America's benevolent imperial past, it was only natural that Filipinos should help to hasten its return. America is the savior come to rectify the four years of "bad" Japanese imperialism; its liberation of the country, whose beacon was MacArthur's landing on the shores of Leyte, thus fulfilling his prophecy, justifies the resurgence of imperial rule under "different" means (i.e. American democracy). More importantly, however, this liberation retroactively justifies America's pre-war "experiment." World War II thus served as the violently explicit validation of American power, in addition to the Filipinos' share in the lugubriousness of its manifestation, the former's resurgence and post-war intensification becoming unthinkable without the latter's consent, and vice versa. Creating, promoting, and expanding American-style democracy is both

[17] Teodoro Agoncillo, *The Fateful Years: Japan's Adventure in the Philippines, 1941 – 1945 Vol.2*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2001), 728.

the burden of the invader and the responsibility of the *cooperative* invadee. Among writings by Filipinos, there is no stronger acceptance than this of the terms by which democracy axiomatizes the Filipino as imperial-State subject.

B. The Impasses of the Left

The more difficult terrain to cross is the one occupied by the Left. The argument can be summarized as follows: that America's return signaled the resumption of imperial rule, one that cannot be recuperated by its opposition to a "worse" form of imperialism—fascism—but whose defeat, nonetheless, was of prime importance. In order to make this argument, these analyses tend to reproduce Agoncillo's principal assumption: that some form of cooperation was necessary, that to defeat the bad empire of Japan the Filipinos had to cooperate, however reluctantly or otherwise, with the better empire of the U.S.

It becomes apparent that the category of *necessity* unites these two positions, and that a violent tension comprises it. The U.S. is the simultaneous liberator and invader of the Philippines, the reintroduction of whose rule was both a *strategically* welcome operation, necessitated by the apparent stranglehold that fascism had on the Pacific region, and an *ethically* and *morally* reprehensible one, which merely replaced one Empire with another and served to extend and continue what had been America's forty-one year long reign over the Philippines' political and economic domains prior to the Japanese occupation.

The implicit logic that enables such a claim is a common one: that Philippine history has been marked by a series of betrayals on its way towards actualizing full political and economic sovereignty, freed from the corruption of American influence. The betrayal of the *ilustrados*, who cooperated with the Americans after the Philippine-American War, was only the first in a sequence that

finds its apogee in America's own betrayal of its promise to grant the Philippines total sovereignty (i.e. more than formal independence and freedom) when it returned with full strength in the post-war era. This narrative of betrayals, which conjures up the idea of a Philippine nation-state destined to be freed and democratized, allows the ways in which America's return has been defined to work. *That the Japanese needed to be removed from the Philippines in order for the latter to actualize its dreams of sovereignty has become conceptually inextricable from thinking of Philippine history, including the American return, as being marked by a sequence of betrayals of its destiny*.

We thus come upon an apparently insurmountable problem: the category of historical necessity means that the American return can be both accepted and vilified at the same time. This impasse is produced when what I described in Chapter 1 as the greatest mistake in thinking a diasporic politics is adopted as the conceptual cornerstone: hegemony. Recall my argument: that hegemony organizes a diasporic politics by first appealing to a delimited notion of the diaspora qua political hierarchies, and that the ontology this posits leads to the abolition of absolute negativities. Moreover, this model of action recuperates dialectics as the principle for struggle, which is also aimed towards achieving a condition of pure *formal* egalitarianism vis-à-vis the democratic ideal. This is Laclau and Mouffe's position, and it is one that is inseparable from the State's logic and thus its power to axiomatize the subject.

This problem is constitutive of the second and more specific version of the Filipino subject I am concerned with: the radical Filipino subject. Its historical parameters are highly specific: it can be found in the policies of the United Front, imported to the Philippines by the country's Socialist and Communist leaders

through their contact with members with the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA).

Two books, when read together, clearly show the impasses of the United Front ideology and its ways of contouring a Filipino political ontology. The first is Amado Guerrero's *Philippine Society and Revolution*, a dialectical materialist reconstruction of Philippine history from the pre-Spanish era to the fourth year of Ferdinand Marcos' presidency. Guerrero, aka José Ma. Sison, is the founder of the newly reestablished Communist Party of the Philippines under Maoist-Leninist lines, formed in 1968 as the CPP-Maoist. In *Philippine Society and Revolution*, he uses Marxism, Leninism, and Maoism to diagnose the problems of the Philippines and to theorize the proper course that a communist revolution must take. The second book is James S. Allen's *The Philippine Left on the Eve of World War II*. Allen was a member of the CPUSA who was sent as an emissary to the CPP. While in the Philippines, he came into contact with Filipino radicals and developed political relationships, some of them close, with the likes of Crisanto Evangelista (founder of the original CPP), Pedro Abad Santos (leader of the Socialist Party of Pampanga), and Bishop Gregorio Aglipay (head bishop of the Philippine Independent Church, founded in 1902 alongside the Union Obrera Democratica, the Philippines' first labor union).

Let us now turn to these two books.

C. The Language of Unity

Philippine Society and Revolution is strategic in its methodology: Guerrero's primary concern is to reconceptualize Philippine history as a dialectic, through which the Filipinos' continual struggle for political, economic, and social freedom becomes visible against the betrayals and setbacks that have beset it, from

the landed bourgeoisie's cooperation with both the Spanish and American conquerors to the bureaucrat capitalists' acquiescence to the rule of dictators like Marcos and their allegiance to IMF and World Bank policies. For Guerrero, the two greatest chances for the Philippines to have established an independent nation were 1) the period after the war of independence against Spain, and 2) the war against Japanese imperialism, during which the now defunct CPP (led by Jesus Lava and Luis Taruc) "sabotaged" the "people's war" that could have erupted against all forms of imperialism, both Japanese and American. Taruc's slogan, for instance, was "Anti-Japanese Above All."[18] For Guerrero, the CPP "contravened the line of the Third International to conduct unity and struggle in the united front at all times and use the anti-fascist popular front to establish a people's democratic government."[19]

Such a critique, however, is difficult to sustain: the Third International's United Front policy was itself flawed. This is where Allen's book becomes important. My claim is that the problem of thinking of a wartime transnational politics (of which Allen's book gives an excellent account), one that occurs between the U.S. and the Philippines by way of the CPUSA's adoption of this United Front policy, *is* the problem of conceiving of the concept of the national-popular/popular-democratic prerequisite for a Filipino diasporic politics. This is the originary moment of which I have been speaking, the problem that the second world war poses for thinking both a national and international political situation. It is in this sense that the enormous intellectual effort required to sustain a critique like Guerrero's reveals itself to be a futile task: it is a mistake to think that adopting a United Front Policy *for* the Philippines can in any way be separated from the

[18] See *ibid*, 626.
[19] Amado Guerrero, *Philippine Society and Revolution* (w/ *Specific Characteristics of Our People's War*) (3rd ed. Oakland: International Association of Filipino Patriots, 1979), 30 – 1.

problems of conceiving of a *transnational* militancy according to the same political logic. Guerrero's critique, in other words, is symptomatic of an error in the United Front policy, one that, when it was transported to the Philippines by way of the CPUSA, made it impossible to think beyond the limitations it imposed upon thinking anti-imperial struggle and the question of Philippine liberation *within the space of the transnational struggle against Empire*. These limitations can be traced to the Third International's misconception of the national-international tension when it came to elaborating a strategy against both Empire and capital, the distinctions between which were themselves left undetermined.

There are three principal conditions upon which the theoretico-political edifice of the Third International's United Front policy was built:

1. The United Front, as expressed *through* the Soviet's standpoint and interests, was heavily influenced by its policy of protectionism, which involved the attempt to construct an *internationalist* vision of anti-fascism through the primary coordinates of Soviet *nationalism*.[20]
2. Left-wing analyses of fascism tended towards instrumentalism, where it became conceived as an *appendage* of bourgeois interests and whose imperial project was seen through the lens of its supposed monopoly capitalist designs. This perspective was blind to the fact that fascism emerged from specific *historical* circumstances (the global Depression, Germany's inability to fully recover politically and economically from the first World War).[21]

[20] See John Gerassi, "The Comintern, the Fronts, and the CPUSA," *New Studies in the Politics and Culture of U.S. Communism* (ed. Michael Brown, et al. New York: Monthly Review, 1998), 77.
[21] See Larry Ceplair, *Under the Shadow of War: Fascists, Anti-Fascists, and Marxists, 1918 – 1939* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 4.

3. There was a general failure to understand fascism as a *hegemonic* project, the instrumentalism of left-wing analyses reducing the historical complexities from which it arose to a kind of "dictatorship" by the bourgeoisie over monopoly capital, which blocked any thought on its manifestation of a set of interests among a diverse set of classes and groups *articulated* within the historical and material circumstances in which the country in question (Italy or Germany) was able to act as the host for fascism's growth.[22]

The United Front was thus born from an idea of unity and popular action whose proponent, the Third International, was unable to negotiate the limits of its national agenda vis-à-vis the international problem of Empire and capital. But there is a fourth condition, which functions as the source for the other three: Soviet nationalism rabidly clung to the idea that it was the vanguard of communism, and it was through this vanguardist nationalism that led it to think that fascism was not a hegemonic project but rather a mere "adjunct to traditional counterrevolution and white terror."[23] The Third International reduced fascism's complexities by thinking it through the instrumentalism of a monopoly capitalism *conceived through the lens of the 1917 revolution's failure to elicit the same upheaval in the rest of Europe as it did in Russia*.

The Third International thus failed to make a distinction between imperialism and fascism. We can add to this another undetermined "enemy:" capitalism itself, insofar as imperialism, vis-à-vis fascism, was still being described through the prism of monopoly capital as a bourgeois, anti-Soviet, and therefore

[22] See Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism-Fascism-Populism* (Norfolk: Verso, 1979), 87 – 8.
[23] Ceplair, 13.

anti-Communist (white) plot.[24] Fascism, it must be said, became, from out of this confusion, *a monolithic, positivistic entity*, a single Evil against which all forms of anti-fascism were to be mobilized.

This positivism was impossible without thinking it through some version of *historical necessity*: the Third International could posit the notion of a United Front only because the Soviet Union's unity with capitalist States (the U.S. and England), as well as the proletariat's unity with anti-fascist bourgeois, would ultimately be justified by protecting the interests, projected into the future, of a Soviet-led communist world, and whose *single*, greatest enemy at that point were the fascist States. Historical necessity, more importantly, *displaced American imperialism altogether as a threat*. This articulation of fascism's positivity to a Communist narrative of historical necessity explains why, in many of the writings done by Leftist scholars of the American Popular Front (cf. Michael Denning's *The Cultural Front*), U.S. imperialism is rarely (if at all) an object of analysis and critique.

The consequences of this displacement are severe when we track it through the concept of anti-fascism among the Philippine Left. This is where Allen's book is particularly revealing; in it, we can see how this displacement functioned to secure the legitimacy of a United Front in the Philippine situation. In a letter to Abad Santos, which he was to then relay to Evangelista for proper publishing, Allen makes the following statements:

> The United States is moving toward alignment with the democratic power against the fascist bloc, albeit slowly and indecisively. . . . The national interests of the Philippines call for vigilance and precautions against Japanese aggression. This coincides with the interests of the United States in the Pacific area, and it would be

[24] *ibid*, 53 – 4.

> folly not to take full advantage of this concurrence. In the broader perspective, the outcome of the struggle in China will be crucial for all the people of the Far East, and if the United States were to withdraw from the Philippines this would be a serious blow against China and encouragement to Japans' designs upon Southeast Asia and the islands of the Pacific. The cause of Philippine independence at this time can best be served by cooperation with the United States.[25]

Allen wrote this letter on September 26, 1937, a crucial year: it was the year halfway between the establishment of the Philippine Commonwealth (1935) and its invasion by Japan (1941). It was also the year Japan launched its "Greater China War" and occupied Shanghai, in addition to being two years prior to Germany's invasion of Poland. Just three months prior, Abad Santos says the following in a letter to Allen:

> I think that a good possibility now exists to obtain greater freedom of agitation and action for the really revolutionary and democratic forces in the Philippines, if an effort is made to broaden the Alliance to include all the progressive elements of the Government Coalition. It is even possible, in view of the world situation, to extend support to certain aspects of Quezon's foreign policy. Specifically, I refer to his recent proposal for the shortening of the transition period [towards the granting of Philippine independence] and his following supplementary proposals: (a) dropping the plan for neutralization of the Philippines, since this is entirely utopian and will play into the

[25] James S. Allen, *The Philippine Left on the Eve of World War II* (2nd ed. Minneapolis: MEP, 1993), 63 – 4.

> hands of Japan; (b) a military understanding with the United States, to the extent of permitting the retention of the naval bases, since these bases are primarily defensive positions against Japan, and since the problems of Philippine defense for the moment coincide with American defense plans in the Pacific; (c) trade agreements, on a reciprocal basis, with the United States, since these, besides their economic benefits to the Philippines, tend to keep the United States involved in Philippine affairs and affairs of the Far East. . . . In connection with national defense, we cannot afford to oppose national defense in principle, but support it fully since it is tied up with the question of Philippine independence.[26]

We see a confluence of a) the ideals of democracy and an independent Philippine nation, b) the ideas and tactics for anti-Japanese resistance, c) an alliance with America, and d) the unity between Socialists and Communists and non-Socialists and non-Communists alike (as long as they were "progressive"). American imperialism *needed* to be displaced—it was strategically removed as an obstacle to a Communist or Socialist future, the opponent of which *at present* was *the same one as that of American imperialism*: the Japanese, or, more generally, fascism itself. The logic of historical necessity required conflating the Philippines' and the U.S.' national, political, economic, and military interests.

This is not the unity, however, whose failed realization Guerrero laments. For Allen and Abad Santos, this unity is thoroughly imbued with the logic of necessity. But for Guerrero, the question of necessity becomes more complicated. His critique of the CPP's sabotaging of what could have been a genuine people's war still conforms to the logic of necessity when he advocates the *opportunistic*

[26] *ibid*, 111 – 2.

deployment of anti-fascism in order to actualize *a very real war carried over against the U.S. as well*, a struggle as much against the Japanese as any other organization, State, or individual that posed a threat to the establishment of "a people's democratic government." For Guerrero, an alliance with the U.S., no matter how strategic, is anathema. Historical necessity, here, is articulated to the project I critiqued in Chapter 1: the *hegemonic* project realized through the establishment of a national-popular/popular-democratic politics, or in other words, a politics enclosed within the State-form.

Historical necessity, moreover, conforms to the logic of *the transition* I repudiated in Chapter 2. The model of time implicit in Guerrero's narrative is based upon a logical split between the present and the future, where the latter is unthinkable *except through an appeal to a past that shows itself to be a continual series of betrayals against a people's democracy*, the creation of which Guerrero shows to be a consistent *potentiality* whose interruption is the very marker of time itself. Without it, his dialectic is impossible. He would be unable to describe history and time as moving towards an eventual realization of this latent revolutionary force; the transition allows him to posit the unity of what I called the *form* and *substance* of revolutionary transformation, where time becomes the marker for a transitional, in-between that *needs* to accept (however temporarily) the *form* of the State (its apodicticities, its abolishing of absolute negativity) as the *only* vehicle for the establishment of a truly Communist society, the prevention of which can then be described as a betrayal to this otherwise wholly intelligible process of historical movement.

The potentiality of the State, the manifest form of the people's will, is founded upon nothing less than the hegemonic ideal and the positivities upon which it relies. The positivity that anchors hegemony as a radical project, as we saw in

Laclau and Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, is democracy—*formal* democracy. In Guerrero's analysis of World War II, democracy, historical necessity, and the transition are all united, conceptually and concretely, by a single positivity, one posited as the former's dialectical counterpart: fascism. While historical necessity, in Guerrero's hands, does not displace American imperialism—his attack on it is as vehement as it is consistent—it does reproduce another of the Third International's errors: it posits the all-too-easy opposition between democracy as ideal and fascism as its negation, an Evil *aligned with all forms of Empire* but which is nonetheless, as this Evil, the *originary point against which a genuine people's democracy is thinkable*. This is the meaning of Guerrero's critique of the CPP: they failed to *use* anti-fascism as the *nodal point* for the creation of a truly democratic hegemony.

In the Philippine situation, then, the Third International's errors have overdetermined the notions of the proper course of action and the terms by which *historical knowledge—which is nothing less than a thought that has been captured by State logic, or the logic of the axiomatic*—have been proposed by the Philippine Left. Let us summarize these errors and their transmutations:

——It displaced American imperialism and found its way into Allen's and Abad Santos' calls for unity between the Philippines and the U.S. during the Commonwealth period.

——Its conception of fascism was recuperated by Guerrero in his positing of fascism as the positivistic nodal point for a democratic hegemony constructed qua the people's war.

Formally speaking, both positions are homologous: the former implicitly accepts the binary logic that the latter explicitly deploys.

We have thus arrived at the following conclusion: *among both the Filipino Right and the Left*, in both the Philippines and in the diaspora, analyses of World War II have been framed by the strict opposition between democracy (Good) and fascism (Evil). Axiomatization, then, occurs from the start. It is easy enough to see it in the pro-U.S. position, but for the anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist one, axiomatization happens by *determining* the very terms of struggle itself. The opposition between democracy and fascism, between Good and Evil, has become unthinkable without first conceding to the *ontological* horizons of the State-form.

At present, thinking of World War II in these binary terms means thinking according to the neoliberal ethic, or formal democracy, *the valuation-as-process whose ability to grant significance to struggles for freedom is the function of Empire and capital*. This is why this logic is inadequate for a militant politics of the Filipino diaspora: it will always resort to an identitarianism that posits the knowledge of struggle as already determined and determinable by the axiomatic. Axiomatization interpellates the Filipino *as democratic subject* the moment he or she accepts the terms by which democracy becomes definable as the liberatory principle of social, political, and economic organization against its enemies past and present, *whether this means fascism, communism, terrorism, and even capital itself*. Democracy, then, defines the notions of equality and freedom for both apologists of neoliberalism and the mainstream Left; as a result, the terms and categories by which revolution is thinkable become indistinguishable from that by which democracy, in its formal guise, actualizes capital's means of exploitation, oppression, and domination. The idea of revolution becomes a confused concept, and the question of change merely an empty gesture towards some Leftist ideal.

D. Towards a Thought Against Which Defense is Impossible

What, then, is left for a militant politics of the Filipino diaspora to think? The answer is this: to think the impossible, *to place thought in touch with the absolute negativity of historical knowledge*. This means that a militant thought needs to think beyond the oppositional positivities that not only condition the way that the Philippine situation in World War II has been defined, but the very horizons by which the Good is thought, produced, and defended today: that democracy can and must be the only Truth of human freedom. *If the post-war reconstruction set the stage for the neoliberal ethic's development into its contemporary form, then the war itself, and the oppositions attributed to it, have become the ideological bulwarks of this ethic's self-actualization: the general and formal ideal of democracy against which fascism has been posited serves as the originary point for the notion that democracy, as neoliberalism or a Leftist popular-national democracy, is both the advent and manifestation of equality and freedom.*

Let us outline, using the conclusions reached thus far, what a thought in touch with the absolute negativity of historical knowledge involves:

a. an understanding of the *genealogy* of the neoliberal ethic;

b. a conceptual engagement with the *archaeology* of this ethic's constitutive dialectic, i.e. that between Good (democracy) and Evil (non-democratic); and

c. positing the concept of this genealogico-archaeological nexus alongside the political, economic, and military arms of the neoliberal-imperial ethic.

These coordinates can be further divided into the following sub-coordinates:

d. rejecting the notion of historical necessity and the transition, which posit the State as a prerequisite for a radical politics, i.e. a rejection of the temporal dimension of hegemony;

e. an equal rejection, within the strict historical coordinates given in this chapter, of the terms by which the second world war becomes available to and as knowledge, i.e. that it was a war between two *positivities*: Good (democracy and the democratic unities) and Evil (fascism); and

f. positing a *non-ethical* and *anti-historical* idea of revolution and militancy, one that exceeds the horizons of democracy's constitutive dialectic (Good vs. Evil) and thus repudiates not only the justification of war waged in order to protect accumulation and democratic governance (e.g., voting rights), but also in order, *in more general terms*, to secure an idea of freedom against that which is *posited* as unfreedom (including a people's national democracy against capital), a positing that always happens through the authority of State logic.

Ultimately, a thought in touch with the absolute negativity of historical knowledge will not only have to think World War II as the originary moment of the neoliberal ethic; *it will also have to think against the idea that fascism was the Evil it was imputed to be—but only because this Evil is posited, as a kind of genealogico-archaeological residue, according to the terms of the neoliberal ethic, where democracy, by producing and defending it, is constituted.*

This means thinking against history, a thought that must also move beyond the dialectic, where the State not only determines the qualities of a valid rebellion, but also the values by which this validity is measured. Only then can a thought on the function of militancy—a thought on and as attribution, or a thought on and as a becoming-militant, or subjectivation—arise.

A militant must do what is nearly impossible: be *un-democratic*, inasmuch as thinking militantly, inasmuch as becoming-militant, means determining in what ways democracy's uses become inseparable from that of Empire, which defends itself and strengthens its fortresses by defining, "smoking out," in George W. Bush's terms, and then killing its enemies.

If this is a nearly impossible task, there is, nevertheless, some hope. Thinking un-democratically, conceiving of how a becoming-militant can happen against democracy's many impasses, finds one of its operators in the following aesthetic form: literature. It is to this domain that we will now turn, for literature allows us to think an ontological immanence, against both the crushing hierarchy of identity and the constraining hierarchies of history.

CHAPTER 4
LITERATURE AND *PRAXIS*: THE NEGATION OF BEING AND KNOWLEDGE

> "Art anticipates work because it carries out its principle: the transformation of sensible matter into the community's self-presentation."
> ——Jacques Rancière, "On Art and Work"

I will propose, in advance, the following thesis: that literature, as a variable operator of a militant politics, is a form of thought capable of inducing a subject that encounters through literature *the absolute negation of being and knowledge in its negation of time*. Such is the general formula of literature's function for militancy: it is capable of abolishing what may be termed the *ontology of time*, which posits a homogeneous political sequence tied, as such, to the State and to axiomatization. Let us keep in mind, then, that the four conditions mentioned at the close of the previous chapter comprise a kind of militant braid of thought only because they are held together by a single, principal condition: that this thought is a thought that thinks itself in its becoming, a thought on the thought of the function of militancy itself, a thought that *includes itself* in its thought *on* the function of militancy. In the case of literature, it is the *reader* who encounters the literary work, an encounter that, *through the act of reading—conceived as a dynamics of thought—is capable of constituting the reader's thought on him or herself as a militant subject*.

In the field of literary theory, a general ontology of literature has been developed and which can aid us in elaborating the dynamics of reading-as-militant-thought, serving thus as the portico to the literary theory I will henceforth advance. This ontology is the phenomenological one, an ontology that can be seen in its

literary theoretical antecedents that some have termed aesthetic response theory or reception theory. The two ontologies that I will address, respectively, are Edmund Husserl and Wolfgang Iser. Hans Robert Jauss, another major name in literary reception theory, will be another significant figure: although he does not, unlike Iser, develop an ontology, he does posit temporality—namely, the future and the past—as a prerequisite for rethinking the militant potentialities of reading, a potentiality that signals the way towards thinking the negation of the present, the political consensus, and the ontological status quo as the horizon for thought. I will then end with a discussion of Jacques Rancière's contribution to a theory of literature's constitution of a militant subject, which serves as an extension and radicalization of the admittedly limited scope of some of phenomenology's categories. The limitations of these categories, and the radicalization that Rancière's theories perform, have everything to do with their conception of two interrelated things: time and community.

In what follows, I will be introducing a series of theoretical coordinates upon which the last three chapters of this dissertation are based. Hence, the rest of this chapter will appear somewhat incomplete; it is a mere skeleton for Chapters 5, 6, and 7, which will not only elaborate in concrete terms these theoretical coordinates' full implications for a diasporic politics—what I will term an *immanent literary theory* based upon the principles of a militant process of attribution—but its connection to an anti-democratic Filipino diasporic subjectivity as well. This immanent literary theory, in other words, will be a theory on how it is possible to think absolute negativity qua literature. This chapter thus acts as the fulcrum of the dissertation, the analytical mechanism that supports the weight of the preceding chapters and swings them over, with added force, towards the final three.

4.1 The Reader-Subject and Beyond

A. The Dual Constitution of the Reader-Subject

One of the key aspects of reader response theory is its use of the Husserlian categories of retention and protention, temporal categories that describe, respectively, the moment of the phenomenological subject's recollection and of its projection towards and anticipation of the future. Husserl described these categories as elements of an *intentionality*—that is, the subject's investment of an object of thought and comprehension with the value of certainty and belief (that the object possesses this or that feature, this or that quality, etc.). The object becomes endowed with a contemplative value, and thus becomes worthy of thought itself. For Husserl, the ultimate intentional object is the material world, what he calls the "life-world." Intending the life-world is a thought process that takes place between two poles:

1. The *temporal* pole. This is the place of recollection and projection, where the subject's past, present, and future constitute a continuum, each level or dimension synthesized into the "unity of one time." Retention and protention are variations of the present, and are intelligible only as, respectively, the "present which has passed" and the "present-to-come." As a function of intentionality, the past and the future in truth intend only one thing: the present. The intending subject, by occupying the present, is central to this intentionality. We can rephrase Husserl's language by describing the temporality of the intending subject as the subject-who-has-passed and the subject-to come. This subject is thus the *absolute* horizon of being *in time*.[1]

[1] Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Tr. David Carr. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 169 (§49).

2. The *communicative* pole. This is where the subject's intentions are made the object of communication and are "communalized." When the subject intends an object in the life-world, it submits this intention to a communication with other intending subjects, what Husserl calls "ego-subjects." Here, thought becomes spatial. The intentions are distributed within a given group, however concentrated or dispersed, communicating the same region of the life-world or the same object in question. The important point here is that these intending subjects all belong within the *same* life-world, which becomes the universal ground for this communication. The subject that inserts itself into the community of ego-subjects as yet another intending ego-subject is the *ontic* horizon of being.[2]

The Husserlian subject, then, emerges from out of a specific relationship between time and the communalization of thought, which, as we will see, is a function of representation. This three-fold relationship, harbored within the Husserlian life-world, will be the main concern for the rest of this chapter and for the immanent literary theory I will be developing and elaborating in the subsequent ones, containing as it does the core elements for determining the phenomenological dimensions of the literary work. This three-fold relationship can be schematized in the following way:

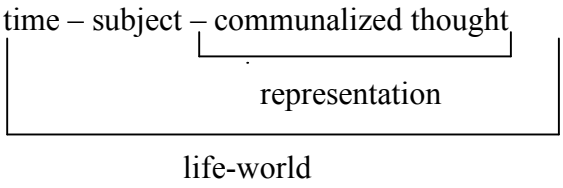

Figure 1. Simple Constitution of the Phenomenological Subject

[2] *ibid*, 162 – 4 (§47).

The belongingness that Husserl develops in *The Crisis*, however, and especially in the pole of communication, is not without its problems. As many have commented, the Husserlian subject is conceivable only after positing its necessary retreat into the transcendental space of serene contemplation. The *epoché* performs this enclosure. Jean-Paul Sartre, for instance, as said that Husserl's description of thought "remained on the level of pure, formal consciousness apprehending itself in its formality."[3] In Husserl, however, this "formality," as the precondition for true thinking, is always a temporary construct; the subject requires that it position itself in relation to the other ego-subjects of the life-world in order for this thought to have any validity, i.e. this thought's communalization and communication, its circulation within the life-world in question. Sartre does not take this dynamic into account. What *is* problematic, however, is Husserl's treatment of time and the subject's occupation of and constitution by it, which ultimately affects communalization itself. The *epoché*, I will advance, will always be enclosed *by the present*, the life-world being the final horizon for experience posited as pre-given.

This notion of time has a direct influence on reader response theory, which posits the subject (in this case, the reader or the receptor of the text) between the same poles of time and community that Husserl does. This is where Iser comes in; specifically, my concern is with his book, *The Act of Reading*, and the manner in which he conceives of the temporal dimensions of the reading process and its inclusion, as the object of a discourse, within a given concept of the social.

[3] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason, Vol. 1* (Tr. Alan Sheridan-Smith. New York: Verso, 2004), 35.

B. Democratizing Literature

Two concepts that Iser derives from Husserlian categories are "the wandering viewpoint" (from Husserl's concepts of passive synthesis) and "intersubjectivity" (an explicitly Husserlian derivation), the former being directly linked to temporality and the latter to community.

For Iser, the wandering viewpoint actualizes Husserl's notion of passive synthesis, which for the latter is the mental process by which images consumed by the mind are processed sequentially, such that every image reproduces every preceding image, but with a difference: it reproduces the image as having a past, as acquiring the quality of "past-ness." *Within the literary work itself*, this, for Iser, is the formula for how readers produce the work's *meaning*: the unity of the past, present, and future into a meaningful whole, the wandering viewpoint passing across the narrative's temporal "axis," as Iser calls it, in such a way that the "first meaning" produced by the reader (that is, the meaning that one initially encounters in the literary work) is continuously being modified and transformed by subsequent images, a meaning whose future manifestations the reader intends (to use Husserl's concept) in the literary work whose "fulfillment" vis-à-vis meaning the reader anticipates.[4]

This temporal model recalls that of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's, who describes the Husserlian axis of time in his *Phenomenology of Perception* as a "network of intentionalities," the criss-crossing of the future and the axes of the past and the present, each of which are enmeshed with each other as the past carries over into the present *as past* projected forward into a future anticipated and intended

[4] Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 148 – 9.

simultaneously with the present.[5] Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology radicalizes Husserlian phenomenology by taking the latter's notion of the "unity of one time" and submitting it to an immanentist critique: there can be, for the former, a single time only because each temporal axis is "in communication" with the others and is internal to the rest, disavowing the need for an external standpoint from which time can be thought as a unified process. This is what Merleau-Ponty calls a "subjectivity's" "disruption" of "the plenitude of being:" for him, a subjectivity is the one *in* time, whereas being designates that position from which time, and the objects encountered within it (including the subject), is seen as a separate "thing" from the one doing the perceiving. This is an ontology, in other words, that displaces being, thought as the *absolute separation between thinking and perceiving subject and phenomenal object*, in favor of the *immanence* of the subject vis-à-vis the phenomenal world, an ontology of a subject's immersion and, even more, its total involvement and inclusion in the dynamism of time's networked intentionalities.[6]

This immanent subject is an important category for the phenomenology of reading, and it is one whose manifestations, henceforth, I will track in the various theories I will address in the remainder of this chapter.

For Iser, the immanent subject is a wholly *textual* subject, the networked intentionalities emerging from the reader's encounter with the phenomenal object that is the literary work (in addition to the images to which it gives rise). It is that which creates the meaning of the literary work: like Merleau-Ponty, Iser conceives of the reader-subject as having ontologically transcended the subject-object binary. This immanence is why, for Iser, the reader's existence, during the act of reading, is

[5] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception* (Tr. Colin Smith. New York: Routledge, 2002), 484.
[6] *ibid*, 489.

reshaped: his or her life, or life-world, in Husserl's terms, is *negated* by the literary work, bringing about a "deformation" of "reality" that in its turns elicits a questioning of this reality itself, of the very terms, categories, and horizons by which it is itself made *meaningful*, by which it is intended.[7] By way of the wandering viewpoint's production of meaning, the reader's life-world is turned upside down, the quintessential experience of being's abolition and literature's temporal dynamic, i.e. its collapse of past, present, and future into a network of intentionalities. The subject, as Iser says, is divided from him or herself.[8]

But if Merleau-Ponty posited the necessity to think the eradication of the subject-object dyad before temporality could be properly thought—that is, that it includes the subject within the networks of which it consists and thus must, alongside the subject, be thought immanently—then Iser does something else altogether: he posits the necessity to recuperate the subject-object dyad before *existence*, properly speaking, can be thought. For him, the world that the reader enters once he or she ceases to be a reader, once he or she *begins once again to exist*, because it has been warped and challenged by the literary work and by the meanings created by the reader, can arise anew: Iser calls it an "awakening," reading being a "temporary isolation" from the world that returns us to it with a refreshed outlook that makes the real world "observable."[9]

This is where *knowledge*, in the sense I gave to it in the preceding sections (i.e. State knowledge, legislated, controlled, and regulated meaning), rears its ugly head. The difference between meaning and *signification*, for Iser, is crucial: the former is completely textual, whereas the latter is "the reader's absorption of the

[7] *ibid*, 228.
[8] Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 155.
[9] *ibid*, 140.

meaning into his own existence."[10] Signification is nothing less than the transformation of what was once a negation, a warping of the life-world and the means of its understanding, into an *affirmation* of things as they are: the passage from the reader-subject to what may be called the subject-in-general (the subject of the life-world) is the passage from the warped vision of the world to a clarified version of it, the observable version of itself as seen by the erstwhile reader, whose standpoint is that of the *subject that apprehends everything in its totality and in its apodicticity*, the standpoint Merleau-Ponty repudiated as the apperceptivity of *being*. Iser restores being, and in so doing recuperates the impassable difference between subject (the subject-in-general) and object (the life-world and its inhabitants, animate or inanimate).

This recuperation of the subject-object binary, moreover, affects the concept of time. Time's network, in which the past rises up to meet the present intended alongside the future, can be equally applied to the shift from reader-subject to subject-in-general: the act of reading and its warping of the life-world recedes into the past, a collection of images that are continually being reproduced in the present, a reproduction, however, that by recuperating the subject-object binary also recuperates the life-world, in its clarity and apodicticity, *as it is*, i.e. in the way that *knowledge* defines it. The clarity of the world, *and the future intended within it*, is possible only because the subject stands *apart from it*. The subject, in short, is thought as an objective observer and nothing more, coming out of the literary experience with heightened senses, but whose thought is completely eradicated from the materiality of the life-world.

This is the problem of Iser's notion of community. What he calls an "intersubjective communication of . . . meaning" is possible only within the genteel

[10] *ibid*, 151.

spaces carved by those have already undergone such a distancing from the world. It is only by doing so that meanings can be produced such that, once set loose among the community, significations can arise that are conditioned, as the production of meanings are, first of all by the subject's division from him or herself, which allows the subject to "observe [his or her] own decisions."[11]

We see here, in Iser's recuperation of the subject-object binary, his correlative recuperation of the general formula of the deliberative process of democracy itself, modified in the tradition of the rationalist modernism of a Jürgen Habermas. In such a model, thought can be thought only through the strict division between the subject and the object, the reader and the life-world, *community being possible only as the circulation of the signs of this division—and nothing more*. This community, then, as is the community posited by democracy, is a community that cannot think past the present life-world, whose clarity is taken as the emblem of those who wish to make it better, whose rationalization is the means by which it can become the condition for intersubjective freedoms. It is a community, in short, that does not seek out a radical transformation of life; what it seeks out, ultimately, is the creation of yet another *consensus*. Thinking this community requires a thought that accepts, in its form, the status quo. The reader-subject, then, is just that: the subject of knowledge.

C. "PREFORMING" THE NEW

If it is impossible to think, through Iser, a thought that thinks a break with the status quo, that thinks absolute negativity qua literature, what we see in Jauss, on the contrary, is a remarkable move towards establishing such a thought, which thinks by passing into the domain of non-knowledge manifest in literature. Jauss,

[11] *ibid*, 230.

however, does not posit an ontology; his reader is not the phenomenological reader Iser constructs. Instead, his concern is with the sequence of literary transformation and innovation itself, from its production to its reception (each process being, for Jauss, unthinkable without the other), with the literary tradition, in other words, and the thought its shifting *forms* enable.

Jauss' principle aim is to rethink the notion of literary history by foregrounding literature's reception, the manner in which it is read, consumed, circulated, categorized, and so on. As a general theory of receptivity, Jauss is already at a more material level than Iser, his theory being based not on the transcendental ego, the subject-turned-being, but rather on a community of readers and, in addition, writers. By refracting his starting point, Jauss is able to address (quite convincingly) Marx's question, posed in the *1857 Introduction*, about how a work of classical art can still manage to move a spectator today when the political economic life surrounding its production (its sculpting, painting, drafting) has already passed.[12] At the heart of Marx's question was his inability to imagine how *communication* is at all possible between a work of art and its consumers. For Marx, this communication is mediated by what is essentially gone: the world of the artwork's production and the artist who responded to this world. In addition to the alien quality of the world depicted in the artwork, the temporal distance between that world and the world of the contemporary consumer erects an *ontological* barrier that, for Marx, *should* disable the artwork's ability to "speak" to the audience, whose ontological horizons are founded upon an entirely different and nearly irreconcilable mode of production to that of the dead artist. And yet, Marx's question concedes to this "speech's" continual occurrence.

[12] See Marx, *Grundrisse*, 111.

Jauss turns to Karl Kosík for a solution: "'The work lives to the extent that it has influence.'" Jauss goes on to elucidate this formulation in the following passage, which deserves to be quoted at length:

> If the life of the work results "not from its autonomous existence but rather from the reciprocal interaction of world and mankind," this perpetual labor of understanding and of *the active reproduction of the past* cannot remain limited to the single work. On the contrary, the relationship of work to work must now be brought into this interaction between work and mankind, and the historical coherence of works among themselves must be seen in the interrelations of production and reception. Put another way: literature and art only obtain a history that has the character of a process when the succession of works is mediated not only through the producing subject but also through the consuming subject—through the interaction of author and public. And if on the other hand "human reality is not only a production of the new, but also a (critical and dialectical) reproduction of the past," the function of art in the process of this perpetual totalizing can only come into view in its independence when the specific achievement of artistic form as well is no longer just mimetically defined, but rather is viewed dialectically as a medium capable of forming and altering perception, in which the "formation of the senses" chiefly takes place.[13]

[13] Hans Robert Jauss, *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception* (Tr. Timothy Bahti. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 15 – 6, emphasis added.

A new version of literary tradition arises in this passage: Jauss demands a rethinking of literary history qua history in general, and vice versa. As Jauss says, this demands a double perspective, one that not only thinks both diachronically and synchronically, inasmuch as the literary tradition needs to be rethought qua the reading public's synchronic and even, one might say, overdetermined, production of concepts regarding the development and evolution of a particular literary sequence, but also literature's "'special history' in its own unique relationship to 'general history.'"[14] This *dialectical* relation between literature and history allows literature to be thought in its relation to two things: 1) the modality of its reception, the way in which a reading public categorizes literature vis-à-vis itself (the shifts in generic codes, the emergence and disappearance of a particular mode of address, a voice, a form); and 2) this reception's *refraction* of literature into perception itself, where what is affected is not just a new concept of literary history, but of history itself, the terms, concepts, and categories by which it has thus far been understood as being capable of mutating through the force of literature's "active reproduction of the past," its reshaping of "the senses."

Although the notion of reproducing the past is clearly important for the present study, let us delay its discussion for the moment and move on to one of the temporal categories that concern us: the future, or what may be termed a literary futurality.

Like Iser, Jauss also privileges, as an analytic category, literature's essential negativity: it can "liberate" the reader from his or her "adaptations, prejudices, and predicaments of a lived praxis in that it compels one to a new perception of things." A key to this new perception lies in the reader's expectations: "The horizon of expectations of literature distinguishes itself before the horizon of expectation of

[14] *ibid*, 39.

historical lived praxis in that it not only preserves actual experiences, but also anticipates unrealized possibility, broadens the limited space of social behavior for new desires, claims, and goals, and thereby opens paths of future experience."[15] Literature negates the world by reshuffling and sometimes even creating those terms by which it is made thinkable. But Jauss moves beyond Iser's recuperation of being by positing the transformation of the subject as having a bearing towards an unknown future, *the idea of which* is nonetheless expressible in the literary work. Given Jauss' refusal to enclose the subject within what is ultimately the ontological prison of being, the way opens up for advancing a theory of absolute negativity encounterable in literature. This, then, is what his double perspective accomplishes: it allows him to posit the existence of a reader that thinks his or her thought, his or her production of concepts and categories, qua literature *and* history, a thought that in its self-reflexivity, its questioning of the horizons that limit its conception of experience itself, is then capable of being transformed by nothing less than the literary work itself.

At this point, it is necessary to retrace our steps a little, and say that what Jauss means when he says *praxis* is nothing but the experience that the subject undergoes with respect to both literature and its lived reality, of history in its unfolding. *Literature is capable of transforming* praxis *because it forces the subject to rethink what* praxis *means in the first place—to rethink not only what it means to encounter meaning in the literary work, but how this encounter is tied to lived* praxis *itself.* This rethinking, it must be said, is the nodal point for Jauss' reconceptualization of literature: *for him, it exists as thought, and as thought becomes what I have termed a variable operator of a subject*. Literature undercuts the reader's expectations—of both the literary work (by surprising him or her

[15] *ibid*, 41.

through a stunning flourish of form, a new metaphor, a new modality of expression) and of the very values by which the idea of a particular object, both material and immaterial (a bird, love, a political sequence), is imbued with meaning. These meanings can be overturned; they are invested with a new image, a new value, a new code.

These meanings are always, for Jauss, *social*. But this is not the sociality or community of Iser's transcendental ego-subject; this sociality is a form of community that posits the existence of a *non-communicative function*: what becomes *thinkable* in literature is *not communicable* precisely because *it does not exist in the horizons within which current definitions and values circulate*. His community is not one that moves within the boundaries of consensus; rather, it is a community that is first of all *thinkable* because it does not *exist*. What it does, *as idea incarnate in the overthrowing of expectations*, is *persist* as the immanent potentiality *of what can be formed beyond but within the present*—of "anticipating reality," as Jauss puts it.[16] This is what Jauss means when he talks of literature's ability to "preform"[17] reality: its production of *new expectations*, its creation of an anticipation of something that has been hitherto buried by the consensus, by the status quo, by the dried up field upon which knowledge is sown. This new expectation, this anticipation of what has remained unthinkable, is the thought that literature manifests.

We are now in a better position to understand fully the importance of the past, especially as it pertains to Jauss' analysis of Marx's query into classical art. It has to do with the relationship between form and content. For Jauss, preforming reality means preforming its content. But what if this content is the content *of* the

[16] *ibid*, 14.
[17] *ibid*, 41.

past, both written *in* and *about* a past that, more or less, is long-since gone? This is where Jauss' solution to Marx's problem is extremely elegant, since for him this question is irrelevant. For the reader, that the content is explicitly *of* the past is negligible inasmuch as literary futurality's ability to preform reality is contingent first of all on the reader's rethinking of history itself, of the means by which, within the spaces of literary history and history in general, the past has *overdetermined* his or her expectations and knowledge. The reader's *praxis* includes an "active reproduction of the past," as Jauss says, only because this past is nothing more than the residual effects of the values, concepts, and categories that have up until the moment of reading become *the sediments of knowledge—of both literature and lived reality*. The question of content is thus ill-formed: what matters is its dynamic interaction with form, of the reader's reception of this dynamic and the thought that it animates: a reevaluation and ultimately a reconstitution of the past that proceeds by way of a headlong plunge into the future's night. What ultimately happens is this: that this night overcomes the subject, the past become unrecognizable *except as the function of a thought that thinks the negation of the present*.

We have thus arrived at the preliminary formulations of a literary absolute negativity. The reader's perspective is in accordance with the perspective I posited in the first chapter: that of a militant Filipino diasporic subject, whose belonging within a common is conditional upon this subject's continual introduction of ontological negativities into its dense fabric. It is also in accordance with the modalities of time elaborated in Chapters 2 and 3, i.e. futurality (the presupposition of an anticipated life) and historicity (the rethinking and, ultimately, the rejection of historical knowledge). But in what way literature is able to express this community has been left unsaid. Its key to its unlocking, however, has already been given: that this community, the common, must be *incommunicable*, that it must exist beyond

the fringes of what is acceptable in linguistic and literary comprehension itself. How, then, does the common become thinkable—how can it be *named* and *attributed*—by such an incomprehensibility?

Recall that the paradox of attribution is that it must take from axiomatization its repertory of meanings and signs in order to disclose and thus make thinkable the absolute negativity that is always threatening to render the axiomatic obsolete, and that the attribute Filipino is precisely the name of a subject (the becoming-Filipino) that points beyond any attempt to enclose it within the field of the State-Empire nexus. This is the analytical starting point from which it becomes possible to think literature's capacity to operate the thought on this becoming-Filipino.

The idea of the common, then, must be induced in the literary work, in whose linguistic aspects this idea must also disable the idea that this common is completely delimitable, that there is something *in* the work of literature that *cannot be communicated* and thus produces in the literary work an extra-dimensional capacity that cannot be described, defined, and thought within the parameters of linguistic communication, beyond the claims of knowledge, one that, along the temporal axis of thought, is both for the future (the negation of everything that *can* be known) and against the past (the negation of everything that is said to *be* known)—in other words, atemporal. It is thus this convergence of atemporality and non-communication that we must discover in the literary work, a convergence that elicits the thought on the non-delimitable common and thus brings us a step closer to discovering literature's ability to operate the thought on militancy, of how it can be a variable operator of attribution and thus becoming-Filipino.

4.2 Militant Univocal

A. Abolishing Communication

Jacques Rancière, in his collection of essays entitled *The Politics of Aesthetics*, repudiates the communicative function of literature, a repudiation that he sets out to demonstrate by way of literature's relation to what he calls the "distribution of the sensible." Contrary to Iser and Jauss, Rancière devotes his attention not to the reader per se, but to the literary work and to the questions that literary writing raises with respect to the values placed on communication—to the social position of the writer, to the mode of address that his or her writing deploys, to the idea of the reader that arises from this address.

Rancière begins, in the book's opening essay, "The Distribution of the Sensible," by engaging Plato's banishment of poets from the Republic. Rancière starts with a definition of the distribution of the sensible: it is "the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it. A distribution of the sensible therefore establishes at one and the same time something common that is shared and exclusive parts. This apportionment of parts and positions is based on a distribution of spaces, times, and forms of activity that determines the very manner in which something in common lends itself to participation and in what way various individuals have a part in this distribution."[18] This distribution and partitioning of activities within a community, the delimitation of the common by way of what is made "visible" qua the activities performed in prescribed spaces, is what, for Rancière, the writer destroys: Plato

[18] Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible* (2nd ed. Tr. Gabriel Rockhill. New York: Continuum, 2005), 12.

derided the poet because, first, "fantasies" (in the form of the fable) that circulated in the public disrupted the hierarchy of identities and overturned socio-political mores, and second, the act of writing itself meant that "the relationship between effects of language and the positions of bodies in shared space"[19] was completely abolished, the idea of a public space, the notion of delimitable common, in which addressor and addressee mark out a definite space of communication, being called into question and communication rendered indeterminate, uncertain, and, ultimately, null.

Rancière, turning to the controversy surrounding the publication of *Madame Bovary* (in which moral outrage was directed specifically against Flaubert's use of an impartial and "indifferent" narrator, which disabled the reading public's ability to delimit the question of moral value qua the writer's attitude towards an "immoral" Emma), calls *modern* literature's linguistic variation of this abolition of the common's delimitability a "refusal to entrust literature with any message whatsoever," an "equality of indifference" that is "the result of a poetic bias: the equality of all subject matter is the negation of any relationship of necessity between a determined form and a determined content. . . . This equality destroys all of the hierarchies of representation and also establishes a community of readers as a community without legitimacy, a community formed only by the random circulation of the written word."[20] Let us say for now that what Rancière is describing here is the non-unity and non-correspondence, in modern literature, of form and content, and that an equality inheres in this divergence which, ultimately, makes it difficult to derive any absolute message from the novel. Before moving towards and exposition of this statement, however, let us clarify what Rancière

[19] *ibid*, 13.
[20] *ibid*, 14.

means when he says that this community of readers is a community without legitimacy. In another essay ("Is History a Form of Fiction?"), Rancière calls this community an "uncertain one," one that "[contributes] to the formation of enunciative collectives that call into question the distribution of roles, territories, and languages. In short, they contribute to the formation of political subjects that challenge the given distribution of the sensible. A political collective is not, in actual fact, an organism or a communal body. The channels for political subjectivization *are not those of imaginary identification but those of 'literary' disincorporation*."[21] We have thus, in the short while that we have been summarizing Rancière, arrived at a trajectory that should be familiar by now, one that, nonetheless, gives an added dimension to our preceding analyses by explicitly relating them to literature.

Let us plot this trajectory, the relationships of whose parts describe the non-delimitable common qua literary absolute negativity:

——literary language posits the common as a reconfigured site, the distribution of the sensible repudiated as a hierarchized, regulated, and controlled apportionment of bodies, activities, and temporalities whose proper delimitation ensures the reproduction of what is said to be a functioning socio-political and socio-economic community;

——the literary language of the modern novel is *indifferent*, insofar as the form and content of a novel have no determinate relation to each other, and where the mode of address does not of necessity correlate with the content of the novel, i.e. where the (political, religious, etc.) message ceases to exist because the unity of form and content, which formerly

[21] *ibid*, 40 (emphasis added).

secured the transmission of a readily comprehensible "moral" traceable back to authorial intent, has been dissolved;

——literary language is thus based upon equality, every subject matter being representable by the novel and no longer contingent upon the specific form of the novel (the morality tale, the religious allegory, etc.);

——the common, because this equality entails, as the previous point says, a repudiation of any message, can no longer be delimited according to the conventional addressor-addressee relation but is rather a common constituted by its illegitimacy and uncertainty, the delimitation of the common qua communication being rendered impossible and thus remaining beyond the purview of the legitimizing forces of the distribution of the sensible; and

——this common, because of its *excessiveness* (with respect to the normal distribution of the sensible), is thus in excess of those forces of *knowledge* and is as such uncontainable by any normal concept of the political, that the constitution of political *subjects* happens beyond identification and through these excess of knowledge that the common's non-delimitability represents.

We therefore have an accumulation of theoretico-political points around which the analyses thus far, throughout this dissertation, have implicitly revolved, but this time related explicitly to the core category that concerns us: literary language. We can say that what Rancière is arguing is that literary language not only abolishes communication, but in so doing can set to work the idea of a common as non-delimitable, and that the political subject that arises from this encounter with the non-communicative function of literature—a reader-subject, if we take subject to mean what I have given it to throughout this dissertation—is him or herself

constituted by way of the negativities that emerge from the schisms that this non-communicative function introduce into the common. This is a common, in short, the idea of which the reader-subject is able to think only by positing its non-delimitability, by thinking its perforation and incompletion, its lack of apodicticity and thus its exceedance of every form of identity, politics becoming possible only through these excesses and these negativities—*which are absolute negativities* inasmuch as non-communication entails the repudiation of both *knowledge* (of what is communicable) and *being* (between two communicants, addressor and addressee).

This is what Rancière calls a "recomposition of the landscape of the visible:" what becomes visible, what becomes available to the senses, is a new common that is otherwise imperceptible in the normal distribution of the sensible, in the hierarchized mode of life that partitions the roles, spaces, and times that serve as the bulwarks to the reproduction of the status quo. This recomposition, moreover, is directly related to *work*. Labor, as Rancière says in the example of Plato, is possible as the reproduction of a certain form of hierarchized life only because it is delimited: labor becomes the reproduction of the status quo because jobs, spaces, and times are divided up to ensure this productivity. The poet, in the example, and literary language in general, for Rancière, disrupts this reproducibility; it forces a thought on a different mode of distribution, one that is, according to the status quo, both *inefficient* and *non-productive*.

Non-productivity, however, is recuperated as a form of production itself; Rancière's goal is to demonstrate that literature is itself a kind of production because it forces the reader to think the non-delimitable common and its capacity to produce the reader-subject. The literary work "[defines] a new relation between *making* and *seeing*." Art is production insofar as it is able to produce a thought on

sensible matter, on the new distribution of activities and bodies beyond the normal productivity based upon hierarchies and control, a thought on sensible matter that is also its *presentation*, its *making visible*.

This is why Rancière can say that art "anticipates work," that it "carries out its principle," which is "the transformation of sensible matter into the community's self-presentation."[22] In the second chapter, we saw that thinking beyond the status quo meant presupposing the future *in* the present—the presuppositional method Marx developed and which Althusser elaborated, and which states that the future, as the absolute negativity of all that is knowable to the consensus *as* and *in* the present, is the concept of the concrete *immanence* of revolution today (or Negri's "communism in methodology"). This is where Rancière's notion of the community's self-presentation takes on new meaning. Self-presentation is not the presentation of the self *through* the literary work; it does not imply the collective production of the novel, but rather, in keeping with what may be called the disruptive productivity of literary language, is an entirely *individual* and almost always *private* form of *praxis*: *the individual mode of the becoming-subject that takes place as the production of the concrete-in-thought of the non-delimitable common qua literature*.

We are at the threshold of formulating in full the general formula for becoming-Filipino, whose precondition is its acquisition of a thought on the thought of the function of militancy. That literature can force the production of the concrete-in-thought turns literature into a form of thought itself; *literature-as-thought* can be the shorthand way of saying this. Inasmuch as it presents the non-delimitable common, literature-as-thought turns the reader into a reader-subject, a process that happens by way of the thought on the non-delimitable common, this

[22] *ibid*, 44.

thought being a thought on him or herself *in* this common, whose non-delimitability is itself *a function of the reader-subject's thought, i.e. his or her abolition of the common's delimitability*—or in other words, the thought on the non-delimitable common *attributed as such*, emblematized by the attribute and named qua the reader-subject's becoming, the basic process by which a becoming-Filipino happens.

Becoming-Filipino, qua literature-as-thought, can be thought as a *non-communicable summoning*, the common that arises from the literary work being produced as a concrete-in-thought that reconfigures the idea of the common as being beyond any apodicticity, beyond *identification*, as Rancière says, the political ramifications of which is to induce a thought by way of the absolute negativity it presents qua the common that the reader as reader-subject thinks in his or her becoming, *as* his or her becoming within the common attributed as Filipino. This is the *making visible* of the common that through the reader-subject's *praxis* ceases to be delimitable.

Moreover, what this *praxis* expresses is its immutable relation between the two temporal poles—futurality and pastness—whose equivalence implies the abolition of time itself, of which we caught glimpses in Chapter 3. This is a subject *for* the future and *against* historical knowledge, a subject constituted by the *praxis* of producing in thought that which is encountered in literature-as-thought: the non-delimitable common attributed as such. We thus have four categories with which to grapple qua literary absolute negativity: 1) time (its abolition), 2) *praxis*, 3) community, and 4) communication (its repudiation).

These four categories, for Rancière, produce a relation of *equality*, a non-hierarchical modality of thought through which the distribution of the sensible becomes reconfigured. What kind of equality, then, is established qua the literary

work and the "random circulation of the written word," as Rancière calls it? If literature-as-thought and its non-communicative function are non-democratic, what form of equality can be thought that does not recapitulate that found in democracy, i.e. neoliberal ethical, ideal? In order to answer this question, we must return to Husserl, whose notion of the bipolar phenomenological construction of the individual was tied directly to a single question: univocality, which gives an added complexity to the very question of the non-delimitable common, and thus to non-communication and equality, itself. It will also, accordingly, allow us to grasp the full implications of what Rancière calls art's anticipation of work.

B. "An Unbroken, Coherent Life"

Earlier, I advanced the idea that the Husserlian notions of time and community enclose the horizon of phenomenological experience within the present. Let us see exactly how this happens.

Recall that the two categories, time and community, are contingent upon the notion of intentionality, defined earlier as the individual's investment of a particular object with contemplative value. This intentionality intends, first, the present, and, second, the life-world the individual inhabits, such that the community that is intended becomes a community of what Husserl called ego-subjects whose shared space is the ontic horizon of being. Husserl, however, posits a world that pre-exists intentionality, and which acts as the conceptual ground for all potential phenomenological reductions; this is what he calls the "pre-given world," the ontic horizon that encloses all "theoretical" and "practical" activity and is thus the "universal field into which all our acts, whether of experiencing, of knowing, or of outward action, are directed" and beyond which "[we], the subjects, *in our normal,*

unbroken, coherent life, know no goals."[23] Husserl sets up as a precondition for the phenomenological reduction the delimitations of both time and community: what is thinkable must be posited in advance as already having an ontic validity, one that ensures that the subjects of the reduction maintain their coherence *because of the universality imputed to what is, to the ontic validity and the ontological security of beings and being*. Intentionality thus presupposes a bias against any potential negativity that may arise to send the ontology of the individual into a crisis, what Husserl calls the "passive synthesis"[24] of the life-world by the individual prior to the *epoché*.

Moreover, the universality imputed to the pre-given life-world is itself the precondition for communication; this universality serves as the conceptual bulwark to the notion that the experience of the phenomenological reduction become communicable within a given community of ego-subjects inhabiting and sharing the same ontic and ontological bearings, namely, that what has been experienced and what is experienceable in communication remain universal constants, intelligibility and comprehension being impossible without presupposing this universal substrate. Understanding is thus premised upon "reproducing" this universal substrate, both the *idea* of the life-world as pre-given horizon and the *concrete* life-world inhabited and created anew through communication, a reproduction that in its turn ensures the unity of the community constituted by communication: "In the unity of the community of communication among several persons the repeatedly produced structure becomes an object of consciousness, not as a likeness, but as the one structure common to all."[25] This is the structure of univocality that anchors Husserl's notions of community and communication, and it must constantly be

[23] Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, 144 (emphasis added).
[24] *ibid*, 361.
[25] *ibid*, 360.

reproduced. As Husserl says, this reproduction of univocality consists of making "self-evident" what is communicated *to* the listener or reader "by reactivating its meaning."[26] This active production is therefore opposed to passive synthesis, and is secondary to it, logically speaking.

What we have here, then, is a kind of pact between addressor and addressee, a mutual acceptance of the universality of the conceptual ground from which both enable communication, which involves turning that which is said or written, and then heard or read, into an *apodictic object of thought*, the outcome of what is essentially *an agreement within and by the community to recreate the structure of relations within the present and its universal givens, the immutable barriers for both thought and experience*.

There are two modes of representation here: the first concerns that of passive synthesis, in which the individual represents to him or herself a passively accepted notion of the life-world, its representation as horizon, and second that of the active production of this life-world as the structure common to all ego-subjects within a given community of communicators, of addressors and addressees, in which the life-world that springs forth from the passive synthesis and the phenomenological reduction it made possible becomes represented to others. If we introduce literature into the equation, as one component of the communicative apparatus of this universal structure, we arrive at the same problems we found in Iser: namely, the individual's inability to exceed the limitations of the present, a temporality that in its turns affects the notion of community, wherein communication happens only by continuously reproducing the self-evidence of things as they are—in other words, by recreating the status quo.

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[26] *ibid*, 361.

We thus have a more complicated version of the diagram given in the first section of this chapter. When introduced into the community, the individual's *epoché* qua literature, what might be termed a literary *epoché*, looks like this:

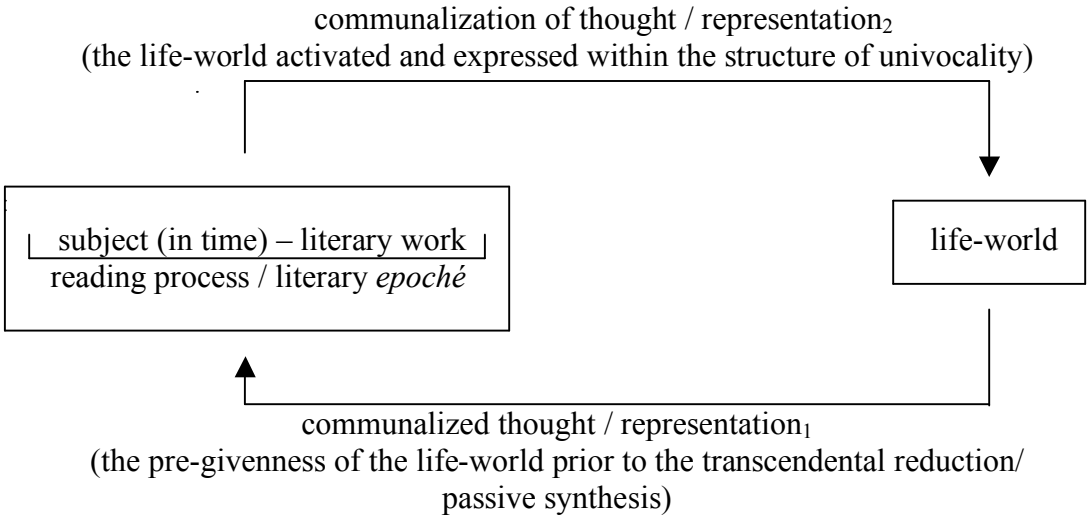

Figure 2. The Constitution of the Reader-Subject Within Univocality

To Husserl's credit, however, the material life-world, as the immense presence that surrounds and penetrates us all, is never an *a priori* thing, but emerges from out of a thought process that constitutes the thinking subject along the way, in time and within the space of the life-world. If we take this as our starting point, Husserl's systematic phenomenology can be said to be driven by a single idea: that of the univocal, or the immense structure of equality within a community of communicators.

This is where Rancière's notion of equality can help us to rethink the constitution of the subject such that it becomes thinkable as a *political subject*, one that resides within the community whose constitution in its turn happens in time. The objective, in short, is to concretize the relation between the active production of

the common qua subjectivity, and vice versa, and its temporal, or rather, non-temporal, dimensions, the continual production of the common and its non-delimitability qua the becoming of a subjectivity *under the terms of equality—but without recapitulating the democratic, neoliberal project*.

We can accomplish this if we reintroduce into the problem that which Husserl denied: absolute negativity. We saw in Rancière the possibility of thinking this negativity along two axes: 1) that of time, where futurality and, by extension, pastness disable time's constitution into a unified field for the communicability of literature; and 2) that of space, where literature's non-communicative function calls into question the distribution of the sensible and the partitioning of the community into categories of production and consumption. These two axes depend upon a single thing: *praxis*, the *praxis* of literature, which a) presents a community that the reader must actively produce as a concrete-in-thought *against* the horizon of the present, positing in it an immanence that disrupts its constitution; and b) presents in this community the idea of the production of this community itself, the *praxis* involved in creating the *idea* and presentation of this community. This is nothing less than the *praxis* of attribution. In order, then, to understand in what way this *praxis* has as its emblem the equal or the univocal, it necessary to do two things:

1. Remove from Husserl's communal typology the impulse to suture the rifts and fractures that besiege it.
2. Formulate a theory on how it is possible to still think of univocality, which seems inseparable from the self-evidence of the life-world, especially since the constitutive element in the common is its non-delimitability and its continual opening towards absolute negativity.

The goal, in short, is to construct a theory of militant univocality.

What follows in the final section of this chapter will be merely a preliminary sketch of how to think militant univocality qua literature, since the remaining three chapters of this dissertation will concretize and demonstrate this thought in their analyses of actual works of literature.

C. The Community of Producers: The Equal

We thus have to think a new relation between the equal and univocal and the One, that structure of relations Negri posits as the immanent and unmediated production of substance by every single one of its attributes which I discussed in the Chapter 1.

Let us begin by saying that the equal and the univocal must be rethought *against* the One, and instead from the principal perspective of what Badiou calls "the Two," the duality constitutive of a radical break with the status quo, the precondition for militant thought and the onset of absolute negativity.[27] If thinking the Two is an indispensable precondition for thinking militant univocality, how are we to conceive of equality when it seems that equality runs counter to positing a break, where equality presupposes some level of countability whose repudiation the Two sets to work by being the *indiscernible* of the common? The answer lies, oddly, in the paradox of attribution itself: what is indiscernible is expressible and presentable within the consensus, a presentability that exposes the consensus' displacement, but ultimately failed abolition, of absolute negativity, thus revealing its vulnerability to being attacked and destroyed by it.

What is equal is the subject's becoming, its capacity to abolish the delimitations of the common. What, then, is common to all within a given militant topology? Every subject's capacity to *think* the absolute negativity of their

[27] See Badiou, *Being and Event*, 188.

axiomatic Filipinization, the undermining—through and through—of their current state of being. What is common, what is equal, is thus double: not only every diasporic individual's capacity to become a subject, which is imposed in this thought on absolute negativity, but every individual's becoming-subject as the thought on this becoming's potentiality, a thought that in itself is tantamount to attribution.

My thesis is this: that what is common and what is equal is this thought, hence, what is equal, through this thought, is the very meaning of *praxis* itself. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that *what is equalized by this thought* is the meaning of *praxis*. This is exactly what Jauss says of the relationship between literature and *praxis*, the former being capable of transforming the latter because what it does is force the subject to rethink what *praxis* means in the first place—to rethink not only what it means to encounter meaning in the literary work, but how this encounter is tied to lived *praxis*. This connection is secured by attribution, that which makes the common's delimitations impossible, the result of the reader-subject's production of the concrete-in-thought of the common whose idea is encounterable in the literary work. If Rancière can say that art anticipates work because it transforms sensible matter into the community's self-presentation, it is only insofar as the correlation between art and work is introduced by *praxis*, whose meaning cannot be contained by notions of productive labor alone, but rather in so-called non-productive labor, *including thought itself*.

The thought encounterable through the literary work, however, is unique, because its *praxis* involves the reconceptualization of *praxis*, a thought on *praxis* that in this thinking becomes *praxis* because it draws, as Rancière says, lines of affinity between making and seeing—the active production, in other words, of what can be seen beyond the normal purviews of the distribution of the sensible, the

active production of the non-delimitable common, whose self-presentation *is* its *praxis*. The common, moreover, in its self-presentation beyond the distribution of the sensible—*beyond the status quo and in exceedance of the political consensus*—becomes thinkable *in its self-constitution*, insofar as the reader-subject that produces it in thought does so only to the extent that he or she *includes him or herself in it*, a production in thought that imagines the common in its becoming, in its attribution and naming, which coincides with the reader-subject's own becoming, with his or her own attribution and naming.

What is encountered in the literary work, then, is this: the community's *self-constitution*, its attribution *against the axiomatic*. *Praxis* is equalized because there is no longer any privileged site for struggle; the reconceptualization of *praxis* qua the common's self-presentation, its production by the reader-subject as concrete-in-thought, means that *thought and politics are united in such a way that the presentation of the community is a form of self-constitution tied directly to its reproduction against axiomatization, against the State, against Empire, against capital, against democracy, and it takes place, as we saw in Chapter 1, wherever axiomatization happens and in whatever way. Literature-as-thought is able to induce attribution precisely because it induces the thought on the common from whose constitution the reader-subject is inextricable, a presentation and production of the non-delimitable common that redefines, against axiomatization, the meaning of Filipino itself.* We can call this the militant univocal, the function of literature-as-thought.

Husserl's life-world, both the represented thing of passive synthesis and the reproduced object of the *epoché*, is thus removed completely; if there is any presupposition at all, it is a presupposition of another equality altogether: that of the potential, wherever axiomatization happens, for absolute negativity's eruption. And

if the reader-subject's thought happens in time, it is not the same kind of time that we find in Husserl and in Iser; the reading process, we must say, does not obey a phenomenological trajectory, but is rather a series of attributions that accumulate, that shift, that slide into one another, that transform, refusing to settle on any stable idea of the life-world by drifting over the field of absolute negativity and allowing the common to be thinkable during the act of reading, as the reader-subject becomes, is constituted by, through, and in the literary work: literature-as-thought.

If there is to be any communication at all, what is thinkable is not the consensual democratic type we found in Iser and even Husserl. Communication must be non-communication, the non-delimiting capacity of language to continuously produce the absolute negativity of the common, its non-delimitability: a non-communication whose negativity arises *from its continual attribution, its continual summoning of subjects against any axiomatization of the Filipino within a common thought as a constellation of militancies.*

The militant univocal, in short, *is a new horizon*, a horizon of *non-being and non-knowledge*; it is the horizon of self-constitutive power that Negri finds in Spinoza. *It is a One that is subordinate to a primary Two*, the radical split within the political and ontological status quo that conditions the emergence of a possible militancy constructed *as a univocal immanence*, a militant immanence that arises from positing in thought an unbridgeable gulf between what is and what is-not: absolute negativity, the thought of which is capable of inducing the thought on the potentiality of revolution *within and as the common, the thought of which is a subject's becoming-Filipino and* praxis *qua literature-as-thought*.

The function of the reader-subject is equivalent to thinking futurality through historicity, and vice versa, a function of *praxis* which is the function of thinking the function of militancy itself. *What the subject can encounter in*

literature-as-thought is a way to think his or her becoming-Filipino, conceived as the equal potential of every subject's becoming against axiomatization and under the terms of an immanent, diasporic topology. The attribution that happens in this thought is a form of *praxis* inasmuch as this thought *includes itself in its thought on the function of militancy, includes itself in its process of attribution and thinks itself thusly*. This is why, ultimately, the diaspora, i.e. the constellational diaspora, is *immanent*: because the subject that thinks its potentiality *includes* him or herself in it as its potential actualization *and* its contemporary realization. The reader-subject, in other words, encounters the constellational diaspora as something that one does not wait for: thinking it is already the first step towards its possibility—*precisely because thinking its possibility is to have already divested oneself of the axiomatizations that constrain a Filipino ontology today*.

The remainder of this dissertation will expand the terms by which this reader-subject *can* emerge. By no means, then, are the following chapters exhaustive of the full potentiality of literature-as-thought. Rather, they serve to enumerate and demonstrate, by way of three novels, three key categories within which a reader-subjectivity can be thought. Respectively, and in correspondence with each novel, these categories are:

1. The populist *balikbayan* (in Tagalog, the one who returns "home" to the Philippines), conceptualized as the literary manifestation of the national-popular/popular-democratic subject I have criticized. This category can be found in F. Sionil José's *Viajero*.
2. The "a-militant," which in this case is also a *balikbayan*, but who is figured as the extreme opposite of the militant subject I have been describing. This category can be found in Carlos Bulosan's *All the Conspirators*.

3. The traitor, who can be said to represent the condition of absolute negativity of the State, capital, and Empire, and is thus the category that allows a reader-subject to think the potentiality of the militant univocality of the Filipino diaspora. This category can be found in Wilfrido Nolledo's *But for the Lovers*.

Accordingly, each novel will, in its own way, represent these categories' relationship to what I defined as the foundational moment of the democratic subject against which the militant diasporic Filipino subject must be thought: World War II, and the problem of the U.S.' return to the Philippines as "liberator." The following three chapters, then, will proceed in a kind of ascending order: first through the literary *negation* of absolute negativity, second through the *ironic* presentation of a-militancy, and third through the *positive* representation of absolute negativity and militant univocality as an object of what might be called, to modify my terminology, "literary thought."

CHAPTER 5
VOYAGES OF "THE PEOPLE:" THE *BALIKBAYAN* AND REVOLUTIONARY MORALITY

". . . the glimmer of light in the distance, the promise of renewal, of rebirth. Finally I revel in this light, this *now* where, at last, I've also found my real home."
——F. Sionil José, *Viajero*

"It is indeed the ideal paradigm of modern socialization: I *desire* to do what I in any case *should* have done."
——Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World*

It is necessary to begin our literary analysis with F. Sionil José's *Viajero* for one reason: it presents, quite explicitly, the literary attempt to precipitate a reader-subject's emergence by deploying and bending "the rules" of a specific literary genre. *Viajero* embodies more clearly than either *All the Conspirators* or *But for the Lovers* the way that literary *form* is put to the service of *securing* the production of a reader aligned with the political coordinates that contour the novel's "shape." The genre in question, and which José modifies (in ways and for reasons that will become clear), is the *bildungsroman*.

It is difficult, however, to categorize *Viajero*. On the one hand, it follows the typology of the classical *bildungsroman*; on the other, it departs from it radically. In what follows, I will elaborate on this generic ambiguity, the causes of which, as we will see, have a lot to do not only with the political function that José seems to want to impart to the novel, but also with the way that this function itself is highly limited and actually finds its logical impasse in the very form that José gives to the novel itself, an impasse that *is actually built into the politics of narration without which the novel's function would cease to exist*.

5.1 Form and Revolution

A. A Classical *Bildungsroman*?

Viajero expresses the geopolitical problem with which I began this dissertation: how to imagine a topology of revolutionary action within the Filipino diaspora. The ontology that the novel presents is clear: one must become a Filipino, but only by returning to the Philippines to fight there. We have to see whether or not this becoming follows the militant becoming-Filipino that I elaborated in previous chapters, and if not, what kind of a becoming this entails.

The novel revolves around a single protagonist: Salvador de la Raza (Savior of the Race, no less), who goes by his nickname Buddy throughout most of the novel. The novel's narrative proper begins with Salvador's orphaning: his biological parents are caught, during the procession of the Black Nazarene, in a rampage of firing Japanese soldiers during the final year of the Occupation (1945). Salvador, having accompanied his parents, is hidden away in a church by his father during the chaos, and is then found by an old man called Apo Tale and is taken to a remote village in the provinces, where Tale and his wife (Mayang) are in their turns attacked, it is implied, by Japanese soldiers. Salvador flees during the attack and is eventually found by a troop of African American soldiers, one of whom, James Wack, takes him back to the U.S to live with him in home in the Pacific Heights area of San Francisco where he works as a professor of anthropology. Thus begins Salvador's story, which follows him as he goes to college, earns an M.A. and Ph.D. in history, travels to Germany, Spain, Japan, Mexico, and the Philippines; meets Benigno Aquino, the assassinated political opponent of Ferdinand Marcos and the husband of Marcos' successor, Corazon Aquino; he publishes books and articles in prominent journals (one of his most

famous is entitled "Exile and Revolution"); and encounters revolutionaries and militants and eventually joins a guerilla squadron, of which he becomes, it is implied, the *supremo*, head organizer and intellectual leader. He is eventually killed by an AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) death squad, burned to death in his home, "accidentally" set aflame.

This cursory description already hints at *Viajero*'s *bildungsroman*-like qualities: the novel's trajectory is essentially plotted by following the life of a single individual who acquires his true identity through a gradual process of education and self-formation. That Salvador is an orphan only exacerbates this search for identity, a search that eventually leads him to contemplate the many historically-determined contradictions in which he finds himself—i.e. being transplanted from the Philippines to the U.S. and adopted into Wack's wealth, his simultaneous identification (because of his ethnicity) and misidentification (because of this wealth, because of his "American-ness") with Filipinos in the Philippines—to his one true home, his genuine ontology: abandoning the U.S. and everything it entails (political, economic, and social comfort and safety), he becomes the "model Filipino nationalist," as critic Sharon Delmendo calls it.[1] But this typology per se is not what concerns us; what is of primary importance is the way in which this typology, and its modification, can potentially induce, or block, the production of a reader-subject. What, then, is the relation between Salvador's becoming and that of the reader? Are they parallel becomings or do they diverge?

[1] Sharon Delmendo, *The Star-Entangled Banner: One Hundred Years of America in the Philippines* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 142.

B. 1789: TIME AND THE SUBJECT

Franco Moretti defines the classical *bildungsroman* as a novel in which "the ending and the aim of narration coincide. The story ends as soon as an intentional design has been realized: a design which involves the protagonist and determines the overall meaning of events. The happy ending, in its highest form, is not a dubious 'success,' but this *triumph of meaning over time*."[2] Here, as it is in Iser, meaning is a function of the reading process; this time, however, it is linked to the production of narratological *events*. For Moretti, what distinguishes the novel as a general narrative form from the short story or the tragedy is that the event or "episode" "does not refer back to an objective necessity, but to a subjective possibility. It is that event which *could also not have taken place.*" As such, the event is "never meaningful *in itself*. It becomes so because someone [a character, the protagonist] *gives it meaning*." Consequently, the "novelistic plot is marked by this curvature toward interiority, which dispenses meaning and thereby creates events."[3] The novel's trajectory is driven by a primary *focalization*, centered on the protagonist, to which the narrative is ultimately subordinate. Events only become significant qua the protagonist's decisions, qua his or her interaction with other characters and the environment, thus producing the realm of interiority. And it is through this interiority that the protagonist acquires subject-hood, through which meaning becomes the *subjectivated logic of the focalization*. In the classic *bildungsroman*, the novel's trajectory is aimed at the protagonist's self-creation, with the build-up towards the resolution being marked by a series of deferrals and frustrations of the final meaning, where the protagonist acquires his or her identity. This, then, is the way that meaning

[2] Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: The* Bildungsroman *in European Culture* (2nd ed. Tr. Albert Sbragia. New York: Verso, 2000), 55, emphasis added.
[3] *ibid*, 45 – 6.

triumphs over time: the final meaning (the protagonist's identity) predetermines every event *in itself* but also *in its relation to other events*—in other words, *in their diachronic succession*.

What we have here is the first coordinate of our analysis of the potentiality of the reader-subject's emergence: the subsumption, in the classical *bildungsroman*, of the synchronic by the diachronic, the flow of events being logically coordinated towards that end where the protagonist is fully "identified" (given an identity).

In the terms of the previous chapter's elaboration of a theory of reader response, this means that the reader would be putatively interpellated (in Althusser's sense) by the focalizations that animate the novelistic plot. Indeed, this interpellation had a specific function in the era of the classical *bildungsroman*: as Moretti says, in eighteenth century Germany and England (the two countries upon which he focuses his analysis), the "pedagogical ideal . . . [substituted] admiration for precocity with the image of a gradual growth, a few steps at a time," which entailed controlling the imagination.[4] Since the protagonist's formation was meant to be mirrored by the reader's own formation,[5] what was the reader to learn from "encountering" the protagonist's development? Moretti's answer is this: "how the French Revolution could have been avoided."[6]

At the heart of this pedagogical attempt to resolve the problems of the Revolution was the concept of time the latter engendered: if indeed it initiated "modernity," the French Revolution produced the idea of a time that was limitless, the protagonist of which lived *for the future* and was responsible for precipitating what Marx called the "permanent revolution" without a conceivable

[4] *ibid*, 46.
[5] *ibid*, 56.
[6] *ibid*, 64.

end, an abrupt rift in social and political life as opposed to gradual growth.[7] This is why youth was heroized by the novelist's of the early *bildungsroman*: it was the representation, in narrative form, of the ideal of *beginning* that modernity embodied. The pedagogical function, however, arises because the *bildungsroman*'s trajectory *must by definition track the protagonist's growth from youth to maturity, thus forcing youth's end*, and thus serving to place a block on the permanent revolution by positing an end; furthermore, by constructing a telos (by allowing meaning to triumph over time), a sense of significative harmony is created.

Moretti identifies two factors that, when combined, create this novelistic harmony:

1. The fact that the classical *bildungsroman* developed in Germany and England *and not France*.[8]
2. The fact that the *bildungsroman* staked its existence on its inability to leave youth unhampered by maturity and old age, a gradual growth designed to curb the disruptive energies of what was essentially a dangerous precocity.

I will address each of these factors accordingly.

1. Unlike France, Germany's and England's social, political, economic, and cultural milieux made it impossible to conceive of the kind of upheaval of values witnessed during the French Revolution. England was enjoying a century's worth of stability after the overthrow of James II during the Glorious Revolution, which resulted in the establishment of parliamentary democracy. The case of Germany is a little more ambivalent. As Stathis Kouvelakis has shown,

[7] *ibid*, 5, 60.
[8] *ibid*, 64.

Germany's most prominent thinkers and artists displayed an irresolvable contradiction in their attitudes towards the Revolution: Germany had undergone a spiritual and intellectual revolution during the Reformation, a theoretical revolution that nonetheless remained unrealized in political freedom. It therefore "lagged" behind France. Germany, however, did have an advantage: it had experienced this revolution inwardly.[9] A philosophical and political impasse thus emerged, one that can especially be felt in Hegel: if, for the latter, philosophy is indeed the embodiment of the Spirit that has been perfected in Germany; if in the Spirit's unfolding it unites with the State and in so doing cancels out the contradiction between them and sublates the latter into a new, divine transcendence, then it follows that philosophy's "new rationality" cannot help but abandon, despite the fact that its proximity to the Spirit is internal to the historical processes that they purportedly animate, the concrete realm of politics and history.[10] Privileging the revolution in inwardness that Germany had undergone, as represented by its most illustrious thinkers, was therefore inseparable from a concept of time that would eventually harmonize all aspects of society by sublating its cultural and intellectual advances into a transcendent State, a sublation, however, that was conceivable *only at the expense of politics—a politics of rupture, division, and irreconcilable differences, one that exploded all timeframes and in so doing created a sense of limitlessness and infinity*.

2. This political harmonization affects the *bildungsroman* in the following way: this harmony requires of the novel that it produce *a novelistic interiority*, an ideal subject-hood embodied by a protagonist who recognizes this harmony as the order of things, and in so doing *focalizes the reader's perspective* in such a way

[9] Stathis Kouvelakis, *Philosophy and Revolution: From Kant to Marx* (Tr. G.M. Goshgarian. New York: Verso, 2003), 32.
[10] *ibid*, 43.

that the pedagogical function of the novel and its philosophical core are actualized qua the reader's identification with the protagonist, or what I will term *the reader-protagonist identification axis*. This returns us to the question of the episode or the event and the subjective possibility that gives it meaning. The novelistic episode is characterized by the relative flattening of what can be represented and narrated; the most mundane and quotidian experiences can become the most significant events to the protagonist, but only insofar as he or she invests it with the meaning that arises from his or her interiority, his or her subjective response to the situation, his or her judgment.

This interiority has significant consequences: the *bildungsroman* squelches in narrative form the contradictions that eighteenth-century liberal thought sought to resolve: namely, the problem of the State's relation to civil society. The former's job was to punish crimes and conduct wars but not intervene in the "free and harmonious formation of the individual;" the State was thus thought to be external to the operations of civil society, the domain of those "spontaneous and concrete bonds" inherent to self-government and the harmony of the normal course of everyday life.

This division between the State and civil society, however, is maintained at the expense of establishing forms of micro-surveillance and control: "Only where the causes of conflict have already been removed from the start is there no need for repression."[11] The site of this removal was the inwardness so prevalent in the German philosophical mind, a transcendent space that could indeed be described as harmonious only to the extent that the conflict between the State and civil society could be effaced by a much more insidious form of repression—that is, by an inwardness that sees itself as having mended the rift because it has

[11] Moretti, 52 – 3.

already been interpellated by the State, because it has shown that it can successfully *police itself*.

Here, we see a fundamental component of the classical *bildungsroman*'s form of interiority: the subject-hood that the protagonist embodies, the narrative's "curvature" towards an inner life that makes events what they are, and his or her ability to construct his or her identity, is actually symptomatic of eighteenth-century liberal thought's requirement that civil society *internalize control*. This internalization of control, this self-policing conflated with self-creation, is thoroughly contingent upon the novelistic episode, and vice versa: the concept of daily life that marks the flattened domain of the classical *bildungsroman* (as opposed to tragedy, as Moretti says), and within which the protagonist's investment of things with meaning happens, needs a milieu in which social relationships are left undisturbed. The harmonious functioning of civil society ensures that the protagonist can pass through safely and acquire an identity, something that a revolutionary situation, in which hierarchies, socio-political values, and the consensus are forced into a crisis, cannot guarantee.[12]

Such is the classical *bildungsroman*'s method of constructing narrative temporality: once meaning's production is secured, the gradual flow of time can begin uninterrupted, a time that, nonetheless, is purely *apodictic*—that is, a time that is overcome by the meaning, i.e. the protagonist's ultimate destiny, that is posited from the start. This meaning, secured by the elaboration of interiority, this curvature towards an inner life that grants to the protagonist the gift of self-reflection and by extension self-constitutivity, is thus nothing more than the literary counterpart of liberal thought's self-policing function. A society of

[12] *ibid*, 54.

control is filtered through the protagonist's identity, submitted thoroughly to the diachronic axis without whose support the novel would fall apart.

This is where Moretti's first factor dovetails with his second: the State, either by being sublated by Spirit or by being placed at a distance from civil society, is exonerated, it is expunged from thought; what is left is a concept of politics that preserves the status quo by opting against revolutionary rupture and for gradual change within civil society alone. But this change is impossible: if civil society exists only to police itself, what we have is the same problem we encountered in Chapter 1, i.e. that the failure for politics (radical or otherwise) to base itself on rupture or absolute negativity ends up doing nothing more than reshuffling the terms by which civil society understands itself and constitutes its topology. The pedagogical function of the classical *bildungsroman* is now much clearer: its job is to interpellate a reader by focalizing his or her perspective through that of the protagonist's path towards self-discovery. The classical *bildungsroman* is a literary form that requires the reader's complicity in *recreating the form of self-policing characteristic of liberalism*. In so doing, the reader is invited to accept the terms by which subject-hood is secured:

a. gradual change vs. a radical break;

c. the apodicticity of time vs. the uncertainty of an infinite revolutionary sequence; and

c. the fullness of meaning vs. the void of revolution.

The classical *bildungsroman* aims to create reader-subjects subordinate to the status quo, the consensus, the police, power, the State.

It is now time to see how *Viajero*, as a *bildungsroman*, fits into this ontological paradigm.

5.2 A History of Betrayals

A. A Revolutionary Trajectory

The narrative temporality of *Viajero*, and, concomitantly, Salvador's self-formation, is propelled by a single thing: Salvador's gradual acquisition of the knowledge of Philippine history, its *diasporic* history. As he travels throughout the world, searching for his identity (but also prompted by his studies and graduate research), he comes across a number of figures, both fictional and historical, both in person and in archival documents, who ultimately push him towards his final decision to "become" Filipino. (I will henceforth place Salvador's "becoming" in quotes to distinguish it from the kind of becoming I have been describing, i.e. a becoming under the force of attribution.) I will enumerate these figures in the order in which their stories are revealed *to both Salvador and the reader*:

1. Parbangon, a datu from the pre-Spanish days, whose story Salvador finds in a translated Chinese document in Chicago's Newberry Library and which recounts Rang-ay's (Parbangon's daughter) elopement with a rival Chinese merchant and whose child Parbangon poisons (and buries in a plot far from "the honored dead" of the Daya, his people) in order to secure the (racial and ethnic) "honor" and "lasting peace" of the Daya.[13]

2. Robert Scapini, professor of anthropology and adviser of Salvador's dissertation, and James Anders, another of Salvador's anthropology professors, both of whom encourage Salvador to travel to Mexico in order to do research on the relation between the Spain and the Philippines vis-à-vis Mexico,[14] where

[13] F. Sionil José, *Viajero* (3rd ed. Manila: Solidaridad, 2004), 48.
[14] *ibid*, 56.

Spain established the *Real y Supremo Consejo de Indias* (1524) as the administrative organ of its empire and thus through which the Americas and the Philippines were ruled. This prompts Salvador to write his dissertation, entitled "Revolutionary Nationalism: The Philippines and Mexico."

3. José Rizal, who is mentioned for the first time in the novel (aside from Rizal's poem, "Song of the Wanderer," which serves as a framing device for *Viajero* and which I will discuss below in 5.2 B) during Salvador's travels through Germany and a copy of whose poem, "To the Flowers of Heidelberg," the mayor of Wilhelmsfeld, where a monument of Rizal stands, gives to Salvador.[15]

4. Maisog, a Cebuano seaman aboard one of the ships of the Spanish galleon captained by Ferdinand Magellan, whose accounts Salvador finds in Seville's *Archivo General de Indios* depict, through Maisog's eyes, the killing of Magellan and his soldiers and sailors by Maktan (an island in the Cebu province) warriors under the command of the chieftain Lapu-Lapu in 1521.[16]

5. Geronimo Piedad and her father, both of whom reside in Seville, the former a scholar of the galleons from the University of Mexico and resident of the same house in which Salvador stays during his visit to the city, and the latter a former commander of a galleon ship and who grants Salvador access to his office's many archives.[17]

6. Francisco Leandro de Viana, a sailor aboard the Santa Teresita, a ship on the Spanish galleon, who recounts the story of the death of all but seven passengers (five Spaniards, seven Indios, i.e. the indigenous residents of the Philippines, cf. 1.2 on the history of the status of the category "Filipino") from an

[15] *ibid*, 64 – 6.
[16] *ibid*, 79 – 87.
[17] *ibid*, 96 – 9.

attack of small pox while at sea, a story meant, like Maisog's, to attest to the Indios' strength, courage, and perseverance through colonization and exploitation.[18]

7. Father Jack Macher, a Jesuit scholar researching the Propaganda movement in the *Archivo*, where he and Salvador meet. Through Father Jack, Salvador begins to ruminate on one of the *ilustrados* exiled in Spain, Marcelo del Pilar, editor of the Spain-based *ilustrado* organ *La Solidaridad* and one-time friend of Rizal.[19]

8. Del Pilar himself, whose story Salvador fictionalizes in hopes of being confirmed "in the future" by historians.[20] The story focuses on del Pilar's personal and economic struggles while in exile, on the efficacy of his anti-colonial publishing activities when Filipinos (now referring to the erstwhile "Indios") at "home" were "always living in danger."[21] We will see that this query is actually more of a reflection of Salvador's own feelings about his sense of privilege vis-à-vis the Philippines and Filipinos.

9. Old Tele, an Ilocano and former worker in the canefields of Hawaii, the salmon canneries of Alaska, and orange orchards of California and whom Salvador meets earlier in the narrative after being reminded, in uncanny fashion, of Apo Tale. Old Tele, before dying, leaves Salvador a chest full of old clothes, notes, and letters; Salvador, knowing that "there was no justice for people like Old Tele," decides that he "should make use of them now,"[22] thus providing the reader with Old Tele's story (told through his own voice), from the time he leaves the Philippines for America to work in Hawaii to his days in California, to his

[18] *ibid*, 100 – 09.
[19] *ibid*, 110 – 14.
[20] *ibid*, 114.
[21] *ibid*, 115 – 21.
[22] *ibid*, 129.

decision, after a visit to the Philippines, to return to California to help the Filipino field workers there, where he begins to record, in essay form, and with the help and encouragement of an American female companion, Laura (who echoes the white female figures in Carlos Bulosan's *America is in the Heart*—Marian, Eileen, Teresa), his struggles as a laborer.[23]

10. Artemio Ricarte, the erstwhile Chief of Operations of the Filipino forces during the Philippine-American war who was deported to Hong Kong by the Americans after refusing to swear allegiance after the Philippines' defeat. During World War II, he supported the Japanese and celebrated them as the islands' Asian "liberators" from American imperialism, and whose opinions and justification for his support of the Japanese Salvador transcribes (in first person) after he reads a master's thesis and dissertation on Ricarte from Tokyo University while visiting the city.[24]

11. Vladmir Ilych Acosta, a Filipino who has worked as a cook on a Philippine-owned and Panama registered ship; at an American owned oil refinement and pipe laying company in Saudi Arabia; at a hotel in Dhubai; on a Norwegian freighter; on a Japanese ship that carries containers from North America to Japan; and finally as an illegal worker in Tokyo, where he is hired as a cook for the house in which Salvador is staying. While there, Salvador hears Acosta's stories of his many jobs, which, as presented to both Salvador and the reader, contours the geopolitical situation of the Filipino diaspora from the laborer's perspective.[25]

12. Chika, the proprietress of the house in Tokyo, who ends up telling Salvador about her father, a head officer in the Philippines' Fort Santiago (used as

[23] *ibid*, 130 – 37.
[24] *ibid*, 156 – 63.
[25] *ibid*, 178 – 90.

a prison during the Japanese Occupation), and his brutal stories (recounted to Chika through letters) about torturing Filipino prisoners. During Chika's story, she offers clues to what turns out to be a stunning twist of the plot: namely, that Salvador's orphaning and her father's death are indirectly related. While at a bar with a junior officer, her father is shot by a Filipino guerilla, the Japanese reaction to which was to seal off the area, in addition to arresting random men and blanketing the streets with gunfire, the very same rampage in which Salvador's parents were caught.[26]

13. Benigno Aquino, Ferdinand Marcos' political opponent and husband to Marcos' successor, Corazon Aquino, who is assassinated by a Marcos supporter on the tarmac of the Manila International airport in 1983. Salvador meets Aquino while both are in Honolulu, Salvador introducing himself to the latter after a speech he gives at the University of Hawaii on the death of the American dream of democracy. Salvador learns that Aquino knows of Salvador through his essay, "Exile and Revolution," a revised segment of his dissertation published in *Asian Journal*, in addition to one of his books on revolutionary nationalism. Salvador is advised by Aquino, in another meeting later that year, to return to the Philippines because he "can do so much to help." "We need you," Aquino tells Salvador, "America does not."[27]

14. Three contacts in the Philippines whose names and addresses Aquino had given to Salvador at their last meeting: Father Jess, a priest in Manila's Tondo slum, who, for the first time, confronts Salvador with the idea of "becoming" Filipino and leaving his "academic dilettantism behind," "to be a part of this brutalized nation;"[28] Professor Hortenso, who was "disappeared" by the

[26] *ibid*, 192 – 5; see also 224 for the complete disclosure of this connection.
[27] *ibid*, 198 – 205.
[28] *ibid*, 215.

Marcos regime for his activism and thus never appears in the narrative;[29] and finally Leo Mercado, a former Huk guerilla and father of Namnama (Ilocano for "hope"), with whom Salvador eventually falls in love.

15. And finally Pepe Samson, protagonist of the last installment of José's five-novel *Rosales Saga*, *Mass*, who, at the end of the novel, flees to the mountains to join the guerillas. Pepe leads him through the streets of Manila during EDSA, those four days of relatively peaceful revolution that hastened Marcos' downfall, and poses him the following question: "So we will get rid of Marcos, but will we also get rid of all the powerful Filipinos who have enslaved us?"[30] He also takes Salvador to the mountains to show him the conditions of the rural areas, where his constant interrogations challenge Salvador to radically question, in ways the he had never done before, both his search for an identity and the problems his wealth and privilege pose to that quest.[31]

If this catalogue of events and people has been laborious in its presentation, its purpose has been to give an indication of the novel's episodic structure and its ideological function: the novel reads as a compendium of these events and experiences, through which Salvador, the *balikbayan*, finally attains his identity. In particular, the last three figures—Leo, Namnama, and Pepe—form a kind of triumvirate that initiates Salvador's genuine "homecoming." The reader is brought along this journey from the pre-Spanish days to the present (in this case, the year or so after Marcos' ouster). Over half a millennium is given as evidence of a number of the following: the Filipino's resilience against oppression and exploitation, as well as the Filipino's defining role in the political

[29] *ibid*, 218.
[30] *ibid*, 241.
[31] *ibid*, see esp. 255 – 7.

economies of its imperial rulers, from Spain and its galleons to the U.S. and the global capital of which it maintains hegemony.

B. The Return "Home"

These episodes, however, function in two critical and interrelated ways. The first is to educate both Salvador and the reader: *the lesson* is that the Filipino is resilient, *the lesson* is that the Filipino is "the proletariat of the world," the message that Salvador wants to convey in recounting Acosta's story.[32] Gradually, Salvador begins to feel that these stories are "needed."

Before discussing this need, however, I should introduce a feature of *Viajero* whose discussion I have thus far been deferring: namely, that the novel begins, even before the narrative of Salvador's orphaning, with an account of Salvador's murder by Simplicio Verdad, the colonel of the AFP death squad responsible for his death. Functioning as a prologue, Verdad tells of his admiration for Salvador's immense intellect, comparing the latter's book on revolutionary nationalism to Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*. After recounting the AFP's surveillance methods and the events leading to the fire that kills Salvador (caused by two low-flying flares meant to illuminate the village), Verdad tells of how he finds a fire-proof box, the contents of which consist of Salvador's memoirs, entitled, as can be guessed, *Viajero*.

Viajero is Salvador's narrative of a) his "becoming-Filipino" and "becoming-revolutionary," and b) the means by which he achieves this becoming, which he wants to then impart to the reader *as such*: the episodes are presented in such a way as to be chronologically *descriptive* of Salvador's growth while also *instructive* for the reader, who shares in the intellectual and (hopefully) political

[32] *ibid*, 177.

growth that Salvador himself has undergone. This is the focalizing power of *Viajero*. But because this *pedagogical* function is initiated by Verdad's prologue, the novel's ultimate meaning, in the sense given by Moretti, is predetermined: we know from Verdad that Salvador will eventually become a guerilla leader, that indeed his search for an identity becomes a success in the end. Moreover, the fact that Verdad is an AFP colonel is significant: the predetermination of meaning is successful in this case *only because of an essential contingency—Salvador's death*. That Verdad says that he and his men had never meant to kill Salvador is only incidental; what is significant is that Salvador's death makes *Viajero*'s existence possible. Salvador's becoming, and the narrative that both describes it and pedagogically communicates its messages to the reader, is thus a becoming framed by the disappearance of the protagonist, a becoming that, once the ideal Filipino nationalist has been born, destroys him; Salvador, from the start of the novel, is already dead, *a death, however, that in itself would have been impossible were it not for his becoming*.

We should recall at this point Moretti's classification of the *bildungsroman* as a narrative form that prescribes, in its symptomatic ideologizing against the French Revolution, a necessary end to youth, to growth: only in this way can the novel curb the sense of limitlessness the Revolution engendered. The end in *Viajero*, however, has another function altogether: what the reader encounters is not a definitive end, but, in reading the novel, *the continuation of Salvador's life—in narrative form—in spite of his death*. *Viajero* reverses the classical *bildungsroman*'s injunction against infinitude by positing the *recurrence* of life *every time the novel is read*. The prologue, then, seems to function only as the enabler of what might be called *Viajero*'s *recurrent structure and form*, its folding back on itself in the continual regeneration of a life that

persists, *as all revolutions must*. Indeed, this is the meaning behind Salvador's contemplation of Samson's question about resistance: once Marcos is gone, what next? Filipinos will still have to continue their struggle and combat the next despot, the next exploiter, the next imperial puppet.

This brings us to the second function of *Viajero*'s episodic character: they introduce the idea that the Filipino persists *in spite of a history of betrayals and attempts at crushing his or her pride and honor*. This is why the novel is initiated and made possible by a colonel of the AFP and not, for instance, a guerilla to whom Salvador entrusts his documents. The spite that runs throughout *Viajero* and forms a large part of its politics is introduced from the very beginning: even a colonel of a death squad cannot help but admire this revolutionary; even a betrayer of the genuine nationalism that *Viajero* proposes is not immune to the power of revolutionary sentiment—both in content and form, as discussed above.

We can now return to Salvador's need to tell stories, his imperative, in short. This need not only anchors the *pedagogical* impetus of *Viajero*; it also gives this pedagogy its *ideological* weight. Salvador feels it necessary to recount the stories he encounters because they indicate a consistent political vision of national liberation that persists alongside the oppression of foreigners as well as the betrayals of Filipinos, from the *ilustrados*, to Artemio Ricarte (who is nonetheless, because of his vehemence towards American imperialism, treated with sympathy), the wartime collaborators, the landowners and the rich, bureaucrats and politicians like Marcos and Aquino, and Verdad himself—examples that are too numerous to cite, scattered as they are throughout the entire narrative. The important point is that this need arises out of an essential teleological vision, without which the idea of betrayal would be objectless and thus impossible. The destiny here, of course, is the destiny to which Salvador

ends up devoting his life: a Philippines liberated from all colonialisms, both external and internal, whose actualization is attainable through the form of nationalism embodied by Salvador himself.

Let us pause here and recall the two most significant aspects of *Viajero*'s recurrent structure and form, that is, the manner in which the narrative's *temporality* manifests itself:

1. that its predetermined meaning, Salvador's destiny as genuine Filipino revolutionary, overturns the temporality constitutive of the classical *bildungsroman* by positing the limitlessness of the protagonist's becoming and by extension revolutionary struggle; and
2. that this predetermined meaning also posits as a precondition for its pedagogical and ideological core Salvador's imperative, which introduces in its turn a narrative telos, at the end of which is Salvador's "becoming-Filipino" and his recognition and acceptance of the meaning of true revolutionary struggle.

These two aspects express a fundamental contradiction in *Viajero*'s temporal "order," an order that is the result of the unity of two different domains altogether (though these are not necessarily respective to the temporalities given above):

1. that of the political and historical, in which the idea that the Philippines' liberation has been constantly thwarted by a sequence of events (the Philippine-American War, the Japanese Occupation and the U.S. return, the more than century-long capitulation of Filipino politicians to foreign, mainly U.S., interests) has been accompanied by an equally astounding history of resistance; and
2. the novelistic and generic, in which the *bildungsroman*, the only form proper to both José's politics and the pedagogical function of *Viajero*,

> requires that the novel "end" in the way it does, that its telos be predetermined throughout.

Salvador's death thus contains both of these domains and the temporalities specific to each: it produces both the impossibility of conceiving of time as a linear process with an end, since reading the novel implicates the reader in what is an essential *resurrection*, and the predeterminations to which narrative meaning is secured.

In *Viajero*, then, time is both infinite and apodictic. Moreover, both domains are symptomatic of much larger political and conceptual impasses. The classical *bildungsroman*, as we saw, in its English and German forms, wanted to quell the dangerous energies of the French Revolution, opting to represent gradual growth instead of rupture, the full intelligibility of time over its opaque infinitude, and the attainment of full meaning rather than the plunge into a revolutionary void. The concept of what may be called a "Philippine revolutionary time," however, is much more complex, since it contains both temporalities within itself. That Philippine liberation has been betrayed is a notion conducive to both the idea of a "permanent revolution" and an apodictic time: on the one hand, the continuity of revolt seems never-ending, expressive as it is of the transformations that political struggle must always affect in the face of the new forms of oppression and exploitation; on the other hand, the politics that imagines this liberation, as depicted by *Viajero*, is always a politics based on what I referred to in Chapter 1 as the national-popular/popular-democratic struggle, the hegemonic form of politics that prescribes the reordering of the status quo instead of positing a revolutionary void, an absolute negativity, from which militancy can begin.

But there is something else here: this politics requires that the Philippines be maintained as an identificatory axis and positivity: the question of diasporic

resistance in *Viajero* disappears altogether; Salvador's homecoming is nothing if not a repudiation of the possibility of becoming-Filipino since, for José, a genuine political ontology requires first that one "become" Filipino in the most literal of senses—that is, by being *in* the Philippines, thus guaranteeing one's ethno-political identity.

What I described earlier as the self-policing mechanism of the form of the classical *bildungsroman* thus holds true for *Viajero*: in this case, however, what is policed and ultimately jettisoned from thought is the possibility of absolute negativity qua Filipino diasporic militancy; and although I will devote more time to this self-policing function qua the reader-subject in the following subsection, I will mention for the moment that the national-popular/popular-democratic ethos, when serving as the ideological and political bulwark to a narrative, produces the following result: a politics based upon the inability to imagine anything beyond the protagonist's final enthrallment to the Philippines, a protagonist who is ultimately still embedded in that cult of individuality that the classical *bildungsroman* so successfully deployed in order to crush the idea of a militant negativity. In a word, the self-policing function manages to find its way back into José's novel, presented this time as that positivity called the Philippines, a politics that is a politics of the State, which, in a narrative focalized around the kind of revolutionary nationalist represented by Salvador, interpellates the reader and turns him or her into the perfect *subordinate*, the reader enthralled to the call of the State and the police.

C. Positing Time

This is not to say, however, that *Viajero* does not modify this particular aspect of the classical *bildungsroman*. Let us see just how far the novel departs from the genre.

The most important modification occurs at the level, no less, than the function of the protagonist's individuality, of his relation to his socio-political environment. This modification has to do with the complex dynamic between the individual and the common.

During one of Salvador's and Samson's meetings, on their first excursion together in the mountains, Salvador, discerning Samson's intelligence, wonders whether or not he was being "haunted by the same thoughts that had badgered him." Salvador then asks Samson the following question, which, though he thinks it is a cliché, is nonetheless an important one "if only so that the path ahead for him would be more clear:" "Have you ever thought about who you are, where you are going—you know, that question about identity which so many are asking? I ask because, if you must know, this is one reason why I have returned . . ." Here is the exchange that subsequently takes place between Salvador and Samson:

> Pepe Samson was silent for a while, then he laughed silently, the laughter turning into a patronizing cackle which Buddy resented.
>
> "You academics, you Americans—you are no different from out middle-class Filipinos wondering about who they are. Did it ever occur to you that this is a kind of luxury you are indulging in?"
>
> Buddy resented being made fun of. "It is a real problem, not a luxury," he said hotly. "It gnaws at the spirit, diminishes a man's worth if he does not know who he is . . ."

> "That's a lot of crap, Professor," Pepe Samson said, then immediately apologized. "I am sorry, but look at me, I have no time to ask such questions. None of us bother with that. We all know who we are, what we are trying to do, where we are headed. I think it is those who have all the leisure, who are not concerned with society or people—they are the ones who have that problem."
>
> Buddy let the words sink in. They were a challenge, description of what he was and even now, what he had always been, a voyeur, a spectator.
>
> "I am Jose Samson, I come from a small village in Pangasinan. I am Ilokano but, above all else, I am Filipino. I am also certain it is here, in my suffering country, where I will die. It really is as simple as that."[33]

Up until this point, Salvador's quasi-existentialist pretensions and musings have remained unchallenged; up until this point, the path towards individual growth and enlightenment followed the course and logic of the classical *bildungsroman*. What, then, happens here, a crucial turning point in the novel's elaboration of a political ontology?

The answer is this: an overturning of the very meaning of the individual itself, of the terms by which it is defined, contoured, and produced within the *narrative's internal logic*, the narrative's presentation of the individual's "becoming" along the axis of meaning, which predetermines and ensures the "eventfulness" (the protagonist's investment of the episode with personal significance) of the sequences that comprise the narrative. Here, Verdad's prologue becomes important again. If indeed it is the first indicator of what I

[33] *ibid*, 255 – 6.

called *Viajero*'s recurrent structure and form, positing as it does the permanence of revolutionary struggle, it is also, because it predetermines the novel's ultimate meaning (Salvador's "becoming-Filipino"), the indicator of what is an essentially *transformed concept of the individual qua the common*: it delimits in advance who counts as "the people" and who counts as the betrayers—respectively, the revolutionary and the poor and the State and those who serve its interests—thus introducing into the social an essential rift, on each side of which is an ontology that Salvador must choose, a choice that, however, has already been made.

As Moretti says, the classical *bildungsroman* was concerned with "the conflict between the ideal of *self-determination* and the equally imperious demands of *socialization*,"[34] and that this conflict was resolved by uniting the individual with the socio-political reaction against the French Revolution and turning him or her into the perfect citizen who polices him or herself, the individual who has internalized State control. The protagonist's logic, his or her choices and thus the meanings that he or she introduces into the narrative, thus aligns itself with this imperative, the "ideal paradigm of modern socialization," as Moretti calls it: "I *desire* to do what I in any case *should* have done."[35] Of course, Salvador is not made to obey the social, if we think of the social as that domain where the State guards itself against any potential revolution. As we saw, however, *Viajero* is focalized around Salvador's arrival at the conclusion that the events he depicts and the stories he tells are necessary; he too is operating according to some imperative.

But what exactly is this imperative? If we take into consideration *Viajero*'s contradictory temporality, then it becomes clear that Salvador's choices

[34] Moretti, 15.
[35] *ibid*, 21.

are not only made in advance for him, hence time's apodicticity; they are also more importantly an index to the much larger question of what kind of a socialization produces this imperative that preempts choice in the first place. If the social space that the narrative posits from the start is already split between the revolutionaries and the betrayers, then the social space of *Viajero* is the social space of a revolutionary community. The individual imperative is thus the imperative of what, for now, I will simply call the common, though this by no means equates the common of *Viajero* to the common I discussed in Chapter 1. Indeed, my objective in this subsection is to determine whether or not these two versions of the common are compatible. *Viajero*'s common is one that is opposed to the civil society of the State, whose ideal individual *is Verdad*, the ultimate counterpart to Salvador.

We thus have a binary: the State and the betrayer versus the revolutionary common, or the *tao* (the "people"), and the revolutionary nationalist. *And it is through this binary that the reader becomes interpellated into the narrative and its pedagogical function.* But this is not an interpellation that happens without acknowledging, despite the imperative that animates it, the ideal of self-creation, that other node on Moretti's bipolar concept of modern socialization. The individual, and by extension the reader, is presented with the idea that the common, the *tao*, contains within itself the potential for revolutionary action. As Georg Lukács has said, one important feature in the classical *bildungsroman*'s structural peculiarity is that the protagonist be "chosen" "accidentally:" "the hero is picked out of an unlimited number of men who share his aspirations, and is places at the centre of the narrative only because his seeking and finding reveal the world's totality most clearly."[36] This is the situation in which Salvador finds

[36] Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel* (Tr. Anna Bostock. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), 134.

himself. His journey is made possible only because of a sequence of uncontrollable events: it could have been any child, it could have been anyone caught in the gunfire that took the lives of his parents. And yet, this is not an entirely contingent sequence: because the circumstances surrounding that day during the procession of the Black Nazarene were revealed gradually, they partially lose their contingent character by being included in every other event to which Salvador gives meaning.

A series of interrelated contradictions and apparently incompatible axes is starting to reveal itself:

1. that of time, i.e. the apodictic and the infinite;
2. that of the relation between individual self-determination and the pressures or demands of the social, or the common; and
3. that of the relation between Salvador's imperative and the contingencies of his being "chosen."

They all coincide in a remarkable way, and for the following reason: they produce the idea of a never-ending process of Filipino resistance whose intelligibility arises from the concept of betrayal, a betrayal that, once recognized, posits an inherent split within the social *as a whole* and thus creates two distinct political *and ontological* camps—that of the State and that of the common, the *tao*.

This is where the mechanism that interpellates the reader becomes obvious: by focalizing the narrative through the revolutionary nationalist, a viewpoint and a perspective are created, one that *produces the division within the social, the idea of an inherent rift whose recognition in its turn makes it possible to think of revolution*. The reader is invited to *make choices*, which are focalized through those that Salvador himself must make *as he encounters the same material, stories, and people that the reader encounters along with him*. The

reader is thus interpellated into this process of *discernment*, which is nothing less than *the production of the meaning of revolution*, the decision-making process concerning what realizing the Philippines' national liberation entails. The reader, in this way, is interpellated *as yet another potentiality, a potentiality that arises by being focalized through the potentiality that is* Salvador and his "accidentality." The tension between contingency and the narrative imperative dissolve here when the pedagogical function is taken into account: he or she, like Salvador, is provided with the chance to recognize his or her own potential contribution to revolutionary nationalism.

This revolutionary nationalism, however, is a highly specific kind, because the reader that is marked as a potentiality is the reader *from the diaspora*, the reader who finds him or herself outside of the Philippines and who is *delimited* in his or her own right according to the logic of the ultimate ontological horizon prescribed by the narrative: that of the *balikbayan* as revolutionary nationalist, that of the diasporic revolutionary nationalist as *balikbayan*, that of the diasporic Filipino who returns home in order to fully "become" Filipino. Every potentiality is a potentiality of the "return," of the choice to go back to the Philippines in order to fight there. Every choice, then, is preempted by a principal nationalism; the apparent freedom that arises from the narrative's flow of events is only an *effect* of what is a basic, fundamental, and immutable sequence meant to ensure the interpellation of the reader as a potentiality of the kind of delimited political ontology embodied by Salvador.

To recall: *the militant univocal*, a new horizon of *non-being and non-knowledge*, the horizon of self-constitutive power that Negri finds in Spinoza, is a *One subordinate to a primary Two*. This radical split within the political and ontological status quo that conditions the emergence of a possible militancy

constructed *as a univocal immanence* is a militant immanence that arises from positing in thought an unbridgeable gulf between what is and what is-not: absolute negativity, the thought of which is capable of inducing the thought on the potentiality of revolution within and as the common, the thought of which is a subject's becoming-Filipino and *praxis* qua literature-as-thought.

On the surface, this formulation shares many similarities with *Viajero*'s politics: the radical split in the social, the idea of an immanent revolutionary potentiality, the production of this potentiality qua literature. These similarities, however, are of course merely superficial. The key is the differences in the way that the One is brought in relation to the Two.

In *Viajero*, the One, the common or the *tao* to which Salvador in the end comes "home," is united to the Two, signaled by the radical split in the social space announced in Verdad's prologue. They are inseparable because the politics of the return, of the *balikbayan* posited as the only genuine political ontology, requires, for its pedagogical function, that the common *be delimitable as such*: it is a wholly apodictic ontological horizon that surrounds the subject (both Salvador and the reader) who, presented with the split, with the Two, has to choose between either side, a choice that, because every story, every figure, and every occurrence is preempted by the meaning of Salvador's becoming (as well as that of the reader-subject's), will always arrive at the One, the One *that is also the point of departure*. *Viajero*, in other words, begins by uniting the One and the Two, and proceeds from there to focalize the reader through Salvador's actualization of this unity's political consequences: his accession to the political ontology of the revolutionary nationalist.

This initial unity between the One and the Two thus affects the narrative in such a way that the time of *Viajero* aligns itself with the production of

knowledge; the stories I enumerated above are nothing if not a sequence of things to be learned by the reader. Although these stories are not presented in historically chronological order (Chika's World War II story comes after Acosta's contemporary one, for instance), they do create a kind of matrix through which history—or rather, Philippine History and its teleological thrust—is defined by the individual's personal history, i.e. Salvador's—the focalizing power of the protagonist swallows the history of the common and turns the *bildungsroman* as the vehicle for the destiny of both nation and individual.

If we can say, moreover, that a prerequisite for a militant reader-subject, is *the breakdown of communication, the incommunicability of the common as a non-delimitable thing*, then *Viajero* does just the opposite: its pedagogy necessitates that the common and the individual unite under the terms of revolutionary nationalism, and that it be communicable and thus intelligible to the reader. This is what is at stake in the narrative's focalization through Salvador, in addition to the reader's identification with him qua the significance he gives to each story and figure, to the decisions he makes concerning the meaning of "being Filipino" and the proper course of a revolution. Focalization does not operate by way of the production of the concept of the non-delimitable common; what is produced is the idea incarnate in *the message* of the narrative. In Chapter 4, I said that the novel's abolition of communication operates through its *indifference*, that is, through the absence of a clear-cut message, the communication of which is constitutive of the narrative's structure. This is what happens in *Viajero*; José resorts to the *bildungsroman* because he wants to impart to the reader his idea of a true revolutionary ontology—and nothing more.

This has significant consequences for the production of the reader's subjectivity and becoming. It concerns the role of *praxis* as the production of the

common as concrete-in-thought. *Praxis* involves the alignment of the common's non-delimitability—which is the common expressed through every subjectivity's equal capacity to introduce into it this impossibility—and this common's production in thought, *praxis* being nothing less than the thought on the common's non-delimitability and thus on every subject's militant capacity. This is how a linear, apodictic time is abolished: the future, this non-empirical and non-realized idea of the constellational diaspora, enters thought as the present's absolute negativity. *Viajero*, and its message, *posits time itself*. The flow of stories and the presentation of figures obeys the sequential order of a learning process, a gradual growth with a definite end; the future, Salvador's destiny, does indeed fold back upon the entirety of *Viajero*, but instead of producing negativities, saturates each occurrence with the fullness of meaning.

More importantly, however, this destroys the function of *praxis* altogether. As Rancière says, art anticipates work because it transforms sensible matter into the community's *self-presentation*. The reader-subject, in producing the non-delimitable common in thought, thus includes him or herself in the common, a production-inclusion dynamic that is the very meaning and basis of attribution: the inclusion of the self within a common cut through by this inclusion. And inasmuch as this reader-subject's inclusion is also the thought on the non-delimitable common, this inclusion produces the thought on the *self-presentation and self-constitution* of the community in which the reader-subject, by thinking it, is included, a thought on the self-constitution of the common that includes the thinker as the producer of the selfsame community. Because in *Viajero* the reader is interpellated into the narrative by first of all abolishing the possibility of repudiating the common's delimitability, praxis *does not take hold*. *The non-delimitable common, in other words, is not given the chance to constitute itself.*

And is it any surprise? This self-constitution requires the immanence of the Filipino diaspora, its constellationality; by positing the *balikbayan* as the only genuine revolutionary, José forecloses on this immanence by recapitulating the idea that the Philippines holds an ontological priority *because it is implicitly accepted as a political economic positivity*. The revolutionary must fight "at home;" therefore, the Philippines' political economic freedom takes primacy over every other freedom of every other Filipino, including, and especially, those in the diaspora. The national-popular/popular-democratic will finds its literary correlate here: *praxis* is destroyed, and what has replaced it is the self-policing mechanism of the reader's putative "becoming" Filipino, his or her assumption of a pre-ordained *identity*.

Clearly, then, this forced identification is merely heeding the call of that ideal that, as *Viajero* shows, echoes throughout time: democracy.

D. Revolutionary Morality

There a number of passages that reveal Salvador's democratic sympathies, but the following are the most illustrative.

During a conversation about race, Wack describes to Salvador (Buddy), then still in college, the persistent segregation witnessed in the South and his own "pain of being black." He concludes his remarks with a glimpse of hope: "'Times are, of course, slowly changing. When we found you, Buddy, we were all blacks in that unit. We weren't trusted enough to fight, like the Hispanics and the Indians. Can you imagine? A hundred years after the Civil War when there were Negro officers in the Union Army? Lincoln went to war, Buddy, on a moral principle—that this nation cannot be half slave, that a black man cannot be excluded because of his color. That is America's strength, Buddy—the moral

principle!"[37] In another passage, during the lecture given by Aquino after which Salvador introduces himself, the former says something that "fascinates" him: "Aquino mourned the death of the American dream, the beliefs of the American founding fathers which have lost their meaning, not because the American people no longer had vision, but because they had become too comfortable with their status and with the dictators with whom they forged pragmatic, opportunistic alliances."[38] And finally, in a passage that recapitulates the first one I quoted, Salvador offers up his reflections on James Wack's "discovery" of him. This passage comprises the narrative's closing paragraphs:

> Here I am, a waif in tatters, barefoot, hungry and sick, and this gentleman with curly hair, this tall American officer in khaki, two silver bars on his collar, picks me up. Oh, my father, look at your wandering son returned to his first memory at last. . . .
>
> I strut around the [army] camp [where Wack brings him] in khaki and olive green, my feet encased in some boy's black leather shoes. In the afternoon, I take them off, wiggle my toes which have lost their freedom, and try to endure the barbed sting of blisters, knowing I have to wear the shoes again for that is what Captain James Wack wants.
>
> When I limp the following morning, he asks to see my feet and I show him the raw blisters which, he says, will heal. His eyes are merry, he tousles my hair.

[37] *Viajero*, 61.
[38] *ibid*, 199 – 200.

> "This is the price you have to pay for civilization," he tells me, then hoists me on his shoulders. I am very glad for up there, I can see much more.[39]

In these passages, we have a sequence that establishes a definitive equivalence between America and some latent, liberatory moral principle, the supreme embodiment of whom is James Wack. The banality of the scene is apparent: Wack's hoisting of Salvador on his shoulders is nothing more than the fulfillment of the latter's identity: his first memory, to which he returns *after*, *he recognizes the need to fight in the Philippines*, marks out the fulfillment of his identity, which is not the identity for which Samson chides him, but an identity that is simultaneously individual and common, the personal attainment of individual significance that is also the joy of "becoming" Filipino and thus revolutionary nationalist. But because this joy is told through the first memory, this is a joy focalized through the following: Salvador's simultaneous *estrangement and his adoption, the originary moment of which is World War II*. He is the adopted son: the American return is the place from which Salvador's narrative and his "becoming" spring. Focalized through him, *Viajero* is, then, a narrative *about the potentiality of revolutionary nationalism, the beginnings of which can be found in the American return,* that moment that, alongside the Philippine-American war, marked the greatest possibility for the Philippines' liberation from colonialisms and imperialisms of every kind, but which was betrayed. The subtext of estrangement and adoption that runs throughout the last passage above communicates the ambiguities in what I described as the logical and political impasses posed to the Philippine Left by the U.S.' return: the

[39] *ibid*, 304.

Philippines was both betrayed by the U.S. as an imperial conqueror, but also saved from the Japanese Occupation.

This is why Ricarte's example is important, the pedagogical function of which is to expresses the tensions of democracy: it reveals, in his absolute hatred for American imperialism, what is nonetheless a warning of also admiring its democratic aura. His alliance with Japan was fueled by this hatred, thus making it possible to excuse him from the narrative's many excoriating remarks on the collaborationists; but neither is he completely excusable, because in this hatred he ended up siding *against the democracy and swore allegiance to Japanese brutality* (as the example of Chika's father most clearly illustrates for both Salvador and the reader). He is an ambiguous nationalist, simultaneously vehement in his defense of the Philippines against American imperialism and yet misguided in the political logic through which this vehemence was channeled.

This is also the explains Leo Mercado's and Namnama's functions as Salvador's initiators of his final salvation: Leo guides Salvador to Father Carlos, who finally reveals to him the circumstances surrounding his parents' death and which fills in the gaps in Chika's story. They guide him, along with Samson, through two significant events in Philippine history: World War II and the EDSA revolution. Samson challenges his comfortable pretensions concerning identity, and the events become the signposts towards the completion of his personal history and his "becoming:" this personal history, moreover, that has its official beginnings in World War II. The novel's focalization, then, also begins with the second world war, which initiates the narration of a six hundred year history that channels the *fullness* of the World War II narrative and becomes the synecdoche for Philippine History itself, the ultimate meaning and destiny of which a democratic morality is at once the basis and destiny.

The problem of America's return is therefore rekindled, but in such a way that it constitutes yet another *betrayal* of an essential freedom: *America has not only betrayed the Philippines by acting the imperial conqueror yet again; it has also betrayed itself and the moral principle upon which it was established and which can still be glimpsed in many of its facets.* There is no better indication of what Delmendo describes as the "entanglement" the Philippines' political ethos with that of the U.S.: "Democracy, political equality, and equal opportunity were neither precolonial nor colonial Filipino concepts. The Philippines absorbed democratic concepts as the result of American colonial rule . . . Thus, Salvador de la Raza's emergence as a successful Filipino nationalist is predicated on his commitment to traditionally American tenets of democracy and equality. Ironically, de la Raza becomes an ideal Filipino when he operates as an ideal American."[40] This ambivalence is the moral-political foundation without which *Viajero*'s narrative structure, as well as its pedagogical function, would cease to exist; it would crumble if it did not reproducing this impasse, the impasse of the idea of a revolutionary nationalist democracy itself. There is no clearer way to see how axiomatization functions than through Salvador's "becoming" Filipino, which is also a *becoming American*. The ideal Filipino revolutionary is the one who upholds the ideals through which Empire axiomatizes the Filipino; Salvador's revolution abides completely by the axiomatic's logic—the logic of the State, of Empire, of capital, of the police. Democratic right, as I showed in Chapter 3, becomes *an imperative*, the securing and proliferation of which is the basis for imperial violence and capital accumulation, whose foundations become immutable once democracy ceases to be a particular instance of political organization and becomes, as Harvey says, an ethics capable of "substituting

[40] *The Star-Entangled Banner*, 159.

[itself] for all previously held ethical beliefs." Whence democratic morality's inescapability, which Salvador's imperative typifies; in his "becoming," in *Viajero*'s interpellation of the reader and in its focalizing power, democracy is the moral ground upon which it exerts itself and sustains both the politics of the narrative and the structure and form that it allow it to function.

At this point, we can make the following conclusion: that *Viajero*, in its repudiation of absolute negativity, in its logical positivization of the Philippines, and in its positing of time, in its interpellation of the reader qua the focalization's production of a self-policing function, in its pedagogy—in short, in those ideological and structural elements constitutive of the novel itself—it expresses that logic that makes democracy such a dangerously universal category of right: democracy's manifestation as a *valuation-as-process*, the political, economic, social, and cultural *ideal* that is also a *process* consisting of advancing humanity's ability to pursue, participate in, and enjoy these ideals. The universality imputed to democracy displaces its relation to Empire and capital accumulation; in the case of *Viajero*, America's role as the proponent, or rather, the principal spiritual host, of democratic right is acknowledged as a liberatory force that has been buried by its imperial designs. Nonetheless, that Salvador chooses to make democracy and morality equivalent legitimizes this universality, and his acceptance of its limitless scope is recapitulates the *force* it takes to make this universality a matter of consensus.

Viajero's time, the narrative trajectory that is compelled by the destiny posited from the start anyway, is therefore nothing if not the literary expression of democracy's valuation-as-process: the sequence of events to which Salvador gives meaning and significance are moments of the elaboration of the perfect democratic subject, the gradualism of his growth extending past its individual

function and reaching out towards the universality of the process by which his political ontology is formed. Salvador's life, as well as his destination, are the allegorization of democracy's self-actualization, the series of rights and ethical beliefs that ground its ideals as well as the means by which these rights and ethical beliefs are carried out and *enforced*. Salvador's interpellation of the reader, the production of the Filipino reader-subject as *balikbayan* and thus as democratic revolutionary nationalist, is the literary equivalent of this enforcement—thus is the classical *bildungsroman*'s self-policing pedagogical function brought to Filipino literature and to the Filipino reader. If, then, the notion of a national-popular/popular-democratic politics proposed in *Viajero* eschews the immanence of a constellational diaspora in favor of a hegemonic version of rebellion, it only because the democratic ideal that lies at its heart cannot withstand the idea of the absolute negativity introduced by the former, those becoming-Filipinos and becoming-militants that repudiate being and knowledge. Unify through the Philippines, that politics says, which ultimately means assuming the *form* of State politics: control, self-policing, only one true and delimitable ontology.

If *Viajero* presents a politics that repudiates the basic coordinates of a becoming-Filipino and becoming-militant; if this repudiation is accompanied by reproducing of the logical and political impasses of imagining national liberation and diasporic politics represented by World War II; and if this repudiation serves as the portico towards the very structure and form of the novel as *bildungsroman* as well, and thus becomes an imperative without which the novel would fall apart, it is now time to see how the presentation of an explicitly *anti-revolutionary* protagonist can ironically produce the opposite result: the notion that there is no logical and political impasse when World War II is concerned, because, quite

simply, democracy is always an axiomatic power. For this, we will have to turn to Carlos Bulosan's detective novel, *All the Conspirators*.

CHAPTER 6
ON THE WAY TO AUTONOMY: CREATING THE READER'S FREEDOM

"Nobody seemed to fit into the roles I had assigned them."
——Carlos Bulosan, *All the Conspirators*

". . . it is false to say that the author *acts* upon his readers; he merely makes an appeal to their freedom, and in order for his works to have any effects, it is necessary for the public to adopt them on their own account by an unconditioned decision."
——Jean-Paul Sartre, *"What is Literature?"*

There is perhaps no other literary genre that exploits focalization as well as the detective or hard-boiled novel: oftentimes told in the first person, the reader is made to share in the very same confusion, mystery, and violence that besieges the protagonist as he (since it is usually male) tries to make sense of the environment into which he has been plunged. Structurally, the detective novel shares some similarities with the classical *bildungsroman*, the most important of which is their mutual positing of a meaning, revealed and acquired by the protagonist at the end, that determines the sequence of events comprising the plot and story, which, in the case of the detective novel, manifests itself as a collection of clues that will eventually form an intelligible whole.

In the previous chapter, we discussed one kind of focalization: that of the classical *bildungsroman*, in service to a revolutionary nationalist politics. This narrative form interpellates the reader into the position of the protagonist's transformation into the properly politicized Filipino, i.e. the radical *balikbayan* who decides that there is no place for a genuine Filipino politics but the Philippines. The distinguishing characteristic between *Viajero* and the novel that is the subject of this chapter, Carlos Bulosan's *All the Conspirators*, lies in the way that Bulosan's precipitation of generic mutations in the detective novel emphasize what is already

a chief element of the genre: that of irony. I will elaborate on my use of the category of irony in the following pages, which I draw mainly from Northrop Frye's typology. For now, however, it can be said that the irony emphasized in *All the Conspirators* creates, *a posteriori*, the possibility of reconsidering *Viajero*'s politics in light of what irony implies: namely, *the freedom of the reader to produce meanings other than the ones immediately given by the narrative*. This involves the reader's recognition of the tremendous gap between the meaning *internal* to the narrative—that is, the significance provided to the events of the plot by the protagonist—and the meaning *external* to it—that is, the concepts and categories *producible by the reader*. These in their turn can be shaped by his or her response to the narrative qua his or her lived, extra-textual experience, whether this entails prior knowledge of the writer's body of work or his or her political and ideological predilections.

This is not to say that this chapter will engage in a reconsideration of *Viajero*. For better or worse, I think that our discussion of that novel has been exhausted, at least for the purposes of this dissertation's concerns. Let it be said that what *Viajero* lacks, and what *All the Conspirators* abounds in, is an openness to the reader's decisions. The latter does not advance, *a priori*, political and ideological judgment; this forecloses on the possibility that the reader could derive anything from the narrative other than complete agreement, in which case interpellation has succeeded, or complete disagreement, in which the reader has refused interpellation outright and thus repudiated the narrative's ultimate meaning. This is where irony comes in and turns *All the Conspirators* into what I will call an *insecure text*, a narrative in which any definite meaning cannot be assigned directly to the sequence of events and which, as a function of the reading process itself, is the very index of the reader's *freedom to produce meaning*—to create, in other

words, the very condition by which the categories and concepts through which politics can be thinkable are indeed thinkable at all.

6.1 Stylizing Autonomy

A. The Inactive Protagonist

Before proceeding to the literary analysis, I will give a brief outline of the plot. The protagonist, Gar Stanley, is a white man born in the Philippines sometime during the first decade of American rule to a mother and father whose wealth came from a gold mine operated in Baguio (a mountainous city located roughly 153 miles north of Manila), and who eventually moves from the country to American to go to college. After fighting in the European theater during the second world war, he returns to the U.S. to work as a shipping broker in San Francisco. One day, he receives a letter from Candy, his childhood sweetheart from the Philippines (also white, but whose personal history is never explained), informing him that her husband, another childhood friend, Clem Mayo (another white man in the Philippines), who had joined the guerillas during the war and had purportedly been killed by the Japanese, may actually still be alive.

Gar returns to the Philippines. He discovers that the evidence Candy possesses as proof that Clem is still alive is a ring he always wore, a brass ring that could not have been taken off his finger (he had gained too much weight for it to be pulled off the last time Candy saw him), thus giving her the idea that only he could have taken it off himself after having lost weight in the mountains (there were no markings on the ring indicating that it had been filed off). Clem then attempts to trace the ring back through the many channels in which it has traveled, in the

process encountering a rich mestizo, Pepe Gonzalez, who is also Candy's suitor, a number of Igorot, and nightclub owners and gangsters. He eventually receives word that the ring, during the war, was used as a signal by the guerillas to inform their compatriots in the cities that they needed assistance, and that Clem's disappearance is somehow linked to a botched meeting with a Filipino commando from the U.S. military who was carrying a money belt meant for Clem and the guerillas but which has turned up missing. He is beaten up, escapes his captors, and creates alliances (many of them the Igorot).

But as Gar uncovers the mystery of the ring and slowly begins to find his way towards the truth of Clem's disappearance, he also winds his way through a conspiracy, realizing that he is caught between two rival factions: the wartime collaborators, who are trying to escape arrest and prosecution, and whose identities are never, until the end, fully defined, and those who are working with the police and the State to capture them.

It is this uncertainty of identities that imparts to the novel its air of menace, a social, political, economic, and legal struggle mobilizing itself around Gar and bearing him along the way. And indeed, unlike other detective novels, like *The Big Sleep* or *The Maltese Falcon* (to name only two of the most popular), Gar is relatively *inactive*: things reveal themselves to him as they unravel, rather than through the force of his physical or intellectual prowess. As we will see, this generic reversal has a lot to do with the novel's production, *through its ironic focalization of Gar's perspective*, of the reader's freedom.

B. Refracting the Police State

Northrop Frye has suggested that there is a direct link between detective fiction and irony. In his classic study, *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye defines irony as a literary modality that does two things. Firstly, it offers up a mimetic representation by having characters and situations that reflect more directly the capacities of the reader and the characteristics of his or her world, which is in contrast to both the mythic and its representation of the "superhuman," and the romantic and its presentation of an idealized or idyllic world.[1] Secondly, and in contrast largely with the romantic tradition, the ironic novel contains an element of social criticism, one that, however, arises *from the reader's own judgment on the text*: the ironic mode deploys a certain level of moralistic *objectivity* on the part of the writer who, in keeping with the conventions of mimesis, "merely states" things as they are, giving details that "[say] as little and [mean] as much as possible."[2] Critical to the ironic mode is the presence of a *pharmakon*, the "scapegoat" that acts, by being sacrificed or punished, as the central point by which the reader's identification, because of the apparent arbitrariness of the *pharmakon's* victimization, of the fact that the punishment or sacrifice has happened only because the *pharmakon* "is a member of a guilty society," that he is "living in a world where such injustices are an inescapable part of existence."[3] The implication is that the reader's identification of an unjust world qua the *pharmakon's* suffering will be somehow refracted back into his or her own life, allowing him or her to see the injustices in his or her own world through those of the fictionalized one encountered in the novel. Whence the social criticism endemic to irony and its mimetic qualities.

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[1] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (10th ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 366 – 7.
[2] *ibid*, 40 – 1.
[3] *ibid*, 41.

It seems, then, that such a formula should find it way directly into the detective novel, with the victim assuming the role of the *pharmakon* whose vindication arrives at the moment of his or her killer's identification, punishment, and, sometimes, death. This, however, is not the case; instead, Frye ascribes the position of the *pharmakon* to the criminal, through whom the idea that society is corrupt and dangerous arises, *but only because the criminal is merely one of the lot*. For Frye, the "case against the criminal is only plausibly manipulated," an almost arbitrary choice that does not describe the inevitability of his crime, the criminal oftentimes quite characterless and almost a caricature; rather, the choice of the criminal is what Frye calls a "settling," as if the choice were either poor or made simply out of the necessity created by the lack of extraordinary options.[4] The criminal, the *pharmakon* of the detective genre, *is what is common in the world of its novels*.

The trope, then, by which the reader is made to identify, is that of punishment, he or she being placed in the role of the punisher while the *pharmakon* becomes condemned as the justifiably punished individual. This is why Frye describes the detective novel as a melodrama in which "we come as close as it is normally possible for art to come to the pure self-righteousness of the lynching mob," transforming the novel into "advance propaganda for the police state, in so far as that represents the regularizing of mob violence."[5] This is a curious assertion, one that Frye, except to say that were it not for the manifest literariness of the detective novel itself (a point I will return to soon enough), does not explain further. Frye posits a split, within the detective novel, *between* the police state and the mob violence *with which the reader identifies*; the reason why the detective novel is

[4] *ibid*, 46 – 7.
[5] *ibid*, 47.

advance propaganda for the police state is because it serves *as a potential warning for the consequences of mob violence*. For Frye, the propagandistic quality of the detective novel is that it *refracts* the police state somehow by serving as the law, so to speak, that keeps the reader's all-too-ready identification with the mob in its proper place; the morality of the detective is thus the morality of the police state's mandate against *the autonomous judgment of the collectivity*.

The question is what kind of a relationship inheres between the *pharmakon*, the synecdoche of society's general corruption, and this autonomous mob—autonomous, that is, from the State and the police. If it is the case that the reader is placed in the position of the punisher—and at this point, we should say that the reader is *focalized through the autonomous collectivity*—the *pharmakon* then becomes the figuration of the police state's *necessity*. But this is possible inasmuch as the reader *accepts the laws that govern the status quo's legitimation of the State and the police*—in other words, of the hierarchized production of the concept of legality and illegality and their proper enforcement and punishment. What Frye is suggesting, then, is that the detective novel is propagandistic *only when the reader capitulates to the status quo* and disavows what is basically an automatic reaction to the focalizations *internal* to the novel, where the plot and character development would lead the reader to identify *against* the *pharmakon* and thus desire his punishment or death. The police state's propaganda is effective only if the reader reacts *against* the novel's powers of focalization.

But Frye disputes the effectiveness of propaganda, and for the following reason: "The protecting wall of play is still there." For Frye, "the more serious [the melodrama] is, the more likely it is to be looked at ironically by the reader, its pity and fear seen as sentimental drivel and owlish solemnity, respectively." On the other hand, the more comedic a melodrama becomes, the more satire intrudes,

"which defines the enemy of society as a spirit within that society."[6] Why? Because detective fiction in particular, and ironic literature in general, "tends toward myth, its mythical *patterns* being as a rule more suggestive of the demonic than of the apocalyptic, though sometimes it simply continues the romantic tradition of *stylization*."[7] What both myth and romance have in common are their emphases on *form*, and it is this formal quality that lends to the propagandistic tendencies of the detective novel its lack of credibility: on either side of the melodramatic pole, as Frye calls it, are the all-too-serious and all-too-comic, both of which cause the reader to adversely react against the novel because it is either too emotionally false or too outrageous as to be satirical. The very fact that the novel is a work of fiction reveals itself; the stylizations characteristic of the detective novel especially—the emphasis on a vernacular type of voice that is often forced to mime the stereotypical sound of hard-boiled dialogue is one example—disclose the generic codes too forcefully for the mimetic bases of the genre to fully take hold.

This is crucial: Frye places a barrier on the police state's entry into the novel because of its *form*, which acts as a buffer against the former's force and power. Moreover, what is left over in our analysis, by default, *is the idea of autonomous judgment*. It is the product of the reader-novel relation, and it allows the reader to think his or her separation from the State, creating the idea of a form of justice that escapes its judicial, political, and ideological grasp.

C. Criminal Romance

But we should not be so quick to accept such a potentially radical critique as a main feature of the detective genre: its ideological sources are rife with

[6] *ibid*, 47.
[7] *ibid*, 140, emphasis added.

contradictions that both criticize and recapitulate forms of power and rule, especially American capitalism and imperialism. Critic Jopi Nyman offers up a brief genealogy of the genre that gives us a view of inherent contradictions and provides a series of counterpoints to Frye's conclusions. For Nyman, detective fiction, and especially its darker, more violent hard-boiled variant, derives its main characteristics from two key sources: 1) American naturalism and 2) the adventure novel, in particular the Western.[8] The common element between them and which finds it way into the hard-boiled novel is the protagonist's individualism, usually manifesting itself in his lone confrontation with a corrupt and greedy capitalist society (as in Frank Norris' naturalist novels), or with an unruly but tameable nature populated by the harsh wind of the prairie, the insurmountable mountain range, and the hostile hatchet-wielding Indian or the drunk and rebellious Mexican. Nyman, moreover, suggests that the rhetoric of individualism has much to do with the rhetoric of the frontier, that is, with Teddy Roosevelt's rugged individualism. Already, we see two strains of thought that converge upon the individual—always gendered male—as the privileged site for subject-hood: as the "trustbuster" fighting against big corporations, as the conservationist who established national parks and reserves, and as the proponent of the civilizing function of America's westward expansion and propagation of its military and economic power in the Western hemisphere (the construction of the Panama Canal and the wars with Spain over the destinies of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines).

Nyman summarizes the contradictions belonging to the detective and hard-boiled novel as follows: "[the protagonist of detective and hard-boiled fiction] is a populist hero who shows the impossibility of order in the corrupt world of crooks,

[8] Jopi Nyman, *Men Alone: Masculinity, Individualism, and Hard-Boiled Fiction*. Atlanta: Rodopi, 1997), 16 – 7.

corrupt politicians, and women of loose morals. If we develop the idea of adventure fiction as an interplay between self and other, the idea of fixed boundaries as protecting stable identity points to the significance of masculinity."[9] The novel, in other words, resolves these contradictions when it fixes the social code through the focalized identity of the protagonist's masculinity, which becomes, let us propose, the *de facto* principle by which the boundaries necessary to the functioning of focalization are established.

Besides naturalism and the adventure novel, we have to look to yet another, more broadly conceived and deeply-rooted "movement:" namely, Romanticism. This, more than either previous genre and category, has a much more direct connection to the socio-political milieux in which the detective novel's ideological roots are ensconced, and for the following reasons:

1. The Romantic notion of the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race, thought to have descended from the noble lineage of peoples of the Asian steppes who made their way into Western Europe, a racial category that was distinguished from others in that it carried with it the very seeds of human civilization itself, expanding from Asia to Europe in a natural and pre-destined trajectory that left its civilizing mark along its vast wake.[10]
2. American scientific racists adopted this notion of Anglo-Saxon superiority and justified the project of Manifest Destiny by deploying the racial markers of what Reginald Horsman calls a "Romantic racial nationalism," which, following the German Romantics, conceived of nation and race as being inextricably linked through the philological

[9] *ibid*, 61.
[10] Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 33 – 6.

lineage of "the people," that is, through a particularized national language.[11]

3. The nineteenth century American authors' proposal to develop a specifically American literary language that, though being influenced by English Romantic models, radically separated itself from thus and thus actualized the nation-language-race trinity produced from out of the Romantic imagination, emphasizing in the process a shared Anglo-Saxon past with their European Romantic brethren (which established the continuity essential to Manifest Destiny), "the virtues of the English language," and finally "pride in a race which appeared to be winning control of much of the world."[12]

This genealogy explodes in the hard-boiled novel as the focalized protagonist's peculiarity: as Nyman says, the hard-boiled novel is characterized by its use of a highly stylized and vernacular language—the "indigenous" language of the strong white, American male.[13]

If indeed the hard-boiled novel's methods of focalization attempt to fix the erosion of stable boundaries, such a linguistic, racial, and nationalistic particularism becomes a critical point of identification by which the legacies of Romanticism and the ideologies and practices of Manifest Destiny as an American imperial project are intelligible: if anything, the latter encountered the problem of a national racial superiority and integrity as the following political and economic problems arose:

——the fears and anxieties that emerged over the inclusion of non-whites into the nation as ever-more territories once belonging to Native Americans and Mexico were occupied and incorporated;

[11] *ibid*, 158 – 60.
[12] *ibid*, 160.
[13] Nyman, 33.

——the question of what to do about the newly freed slaves and their socio-political and economic status as a massive surplus labor force;

——and, eventually, the question of the Philippines itself, which became an issue of the proper management of an "assimilated" nation whose status became that of a "ward" to the U.S.

The problem that the idealized Anglo-Saxon American faced was the problem of economic, political, and even military control of the territories it occupied as it indeed expanded westward and fulfilled its destiny. This is the imperial history, a history of control and the attempt to grapple with an impossible racial, national, and linguistic ideal, that lies at the heart of the hard-boiled novel's methods of focalization.

We thus have, at this point, two starting points by which *All the Conspirators* can be analyzed: 1) the notion that the detective novel, in its *form and style*, is able to refract the police state's propagandistic forces and to thus focalize the narrative, *by default*, qua the idea of *the reader's autonomous judgment*, i.e. the detective novel's ironic mode; and 2) the notion that the detective novel, and hard-boiled fiction especially, is *genealogically* inseparable from those very self-same forces that ideologically sustained American imperial State-building, i.e. the production and regulation of notions of a proper male Anglo-Saxon subject-hood immersed in the expansion of the Empire westward towards what would eventually become California and into the Pacific towards the Philippines. My thesis is this: that *All the Conspirators* elaborates both coordinates without attempting to resolve their essential contradiction, resulting in a text that ends up ironizing the very ideologico-genealogical sources of its genre and thus of its methods of narration, in addition to the means by which it focalizes the reader through its protagonist, Gar Stanley.

6.2 Securing the Freedom of the Reader

A. An Anti-Imperialist Allegory?

As I mentioned above, Gar is distinguished from most, if not all, hard-boiled protagonists by being completely in the mercy of his environment. If indeed one of the ideological functions of the genre has been to secure the concept of a stable white American male identity amid the inherent differentiations of imperial expansion's political, economic, and cultural integration of lands and people, what happens when this formula is transplanted into post-war Philippines, a period when State-restructuring and rebuilding meant the hunting and prosecution of the collaborators?

The process of determining the identity of the collaborators proved to be a difficult task, one that proved almost futile once those who were caught were actually never punished, as in the case of Manuel Roxas, the top rice collector for the Japanese army (who was never tried because he was defended by his friend General McArthur) and was eventually elected president of the newly-"independent" Philippine Republic (declared on July 4, 1946). As Gar himself states: "Nobody seemed to fit into the roles I had assigned them."[14] This revelation comes almost at the end of the novel, when Gar realizes that the key conspirator was always Candy who, having learned that Clem was still alive in the mountains and still possessed the money belt, worked with Montalvo, a prominent Manileño and bank owner, to kill Clem to steal the money belt as well as silence him: he had information regarding Candy's own collaboration with the Japanese. Gar, moreover, realizes that has actually been used: the only reason Candy was able to track down Clem was because Gar had done all the work himself.

[14] Carlos Bulosan, *All the Conspirators* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 129.

At this point it might be useful to recall the narrative trajectory of the *bildungsroman*, in which the meaning that emerges at the end comes to determine the course of the novel, every detail becoming imbued with a significance the full extent of which is intelligible only at the end: "the triumph," as Moretti calls it, "of meaning over time." What, then, is the meaning that triumphs at the end of *All the Conspirators*? Nothing but the idea that, all along, Gar was unable to control his environment, that every code that presented itself before him was indecipherable without the help of those who were already "on the inside," those who were either collaborators themselves and were thus "in" on Candy's scheme, or those who were in possession of that knowledge all along (such as Pepe Gonzalez, who turns out to be a police inspector searching for the collaborators) or have a special "insider's" knowledge of Philippine society and politics (such as the Igorots who help Gar along the way). The meaning, the significance of the ring and Clem's apparent disappearance, delimits Gar's perspective, his search charting out a course in which his immense "distance" from the Philippines, created by the length of his absence, makes it impossible for him to understand the conditions in which the Philippines has been plunged in the post-war period. In terms of the focalization that the novel produces, the time of the novel is one in which the conventional coordinates by which mystery in the detective or hard-boiled novel is created (the absence of "the full picture") are aligned directly with the problem of determining the Philippines' wartime political alliances *ex post facto*. *The search for meaning that pushes the trajectory of* All the Conspirators *is thus the problem of the deferral of a meaning that does nothing more, once this meaning emerges, than underscore the problem of finding the meaning of Philippine politics itself*—of, what is more, the meaning of *Philippine nationalism* and, perhaps, of a revolutionary *anti-imperialism*.

In this way, it can be said that *All the Conspirators* allegorizes the reading process and its focalizing mechanism as containing within themselves the inherent problem of producing meaning, which is the question that is at the heart of this dissertation: what does it mean to return to the Philippines (whether literally or figuratively) in the name of some kind of anti-imperial politics? This, however, would be too easy a conclusion, for what such a proposition ignores is the fact that Gar is a white male returning to the Philippines. This returns us to the question of the *balikbayan* discussed in the previous chapter. The following sections will lead up to and finally discuss this question.

B. Abolishing Communication, Continued

If what this dissertation is concerned with is the potential production of a militant diasporic subject qua literature-as-thought, what kind of a subject is producible in *All the Conspirators'* focalizing mechanisms?

Like Frye, Georg Lukács attributes to modern literature the quality of irony, except to him it is an outcome of modern capitalism's creation of a split between subject and object, the former being alienated from the objective world that surrounds him or her. This is the Lukács who famously used the Marxian concept of alienation to describe the reifying forces of a commodity culture.[15] For Lukács, irony qua modern capitalism makes it way into literature as the protagonist's continually failed attempts at establishing a connection with "reality," at positing a meaning to his or her environment as a means to negotiate its challenges. Such an endeavor, however, is futile: the idea of an organic totality that is delimitable by a subject is completely illusory. The only actual "reality" is contingency, modern

[15] See Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness* (Tr. Rodney Livingstone. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), esp. 83 – 222

civilization being incapable of rationalization.[16] As a result, literary meaning takes on an entirely different quality: the "outside world" is given a heterogeneity, each level penetrated by meaning and thus ordered and made controllable by a signifying subject.[17] What is ironic is the expression of in the novel "of the self-correction of the world's fragility:" it is the *resolutely fictional* ordering of the world into a knowable object, the *clearly manufactured and produced* quality of the novel's representation of an organic totality.[18]

All the Conspirators, however, takes this ironic quality and amplifies it: the idea of a representable organic totality is abolished completely. Gar's realization in the end that nobody fit into the roles he had assigned them makes him less of a subject, in the sense given above, i.e. as a receptive, signifying individual who "reads" the outside world, and more of a medium for the expression of what is an essential unknowability and contingency: that of the political situation of a Philippines undergoing reconstruction and attempting to consolidate itself as a proper nation-state just granted (nominal) independence.

In this sense, the overcoming of literary time by meaning happens in such a way that time becomes abolished as a well-ordered sequence within which some final meaning is elaborated: it is not that time is subordinate to meaning, but rather that time, conceived as the means by which meaning unfolds itself, ceases to exist. What replaces it, concomitant with the final revelation that the only meaning conceivable in *All the Conspirators* is that of contingency, is a series of events that have meaning only by their completely loose and *forced* relation to each other. If indeed a function of irony, as Lukács suggests, is to create a world that is inherently

[16] Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel* (Tr. Anna Bostock. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), 76 – 7, 138.
[17] *ibid*, 137 – 8.
[18] *ibid*, 75.

impossible, then the abolished time of *All the Conspirators* produces a vacuum that becomes occupied by the fabrications whose meanings possess no readily available organicity, but are rather disjointed and heterogeneous. Time becomes impossible because the notion of a telos is abandoned in favor of the ironic mode's production of a multiplicity of meanings, the apparent center (Gar) that orders and fixes them being removed of his privileged position and instead acting as the filter through which this multiplicity becomes intelligible.

This is where focalization becomes crucial: the reader, through Gar, sees this multiplicity. The reading process becomes a sequence of attempts at establishing an organic totality that, in the end, encounters its ultimate frustration: that fact that, although Clem's disappearance has been solved, although Candy is revealed to be the true criminal, what remains is the overwhelming feeling that, because the protagonist was used, because he was unable to conform to the typical image of the detective or hard-boiled protagonist, there is still much that remains beyond the purview of the narrative focalizing mechanism. *All the Conspirators* ends by creating the idea that it itself has been unable to adequately represent the political situation of post-war Philippines.

If organic meaning is thus impossible, what takes its place is the absolute *indifference* of the novel's communicative apparatus: as Rancière says, the indifference characteristic of modern literature abolishes communication by destroying any single perspective by which judgment (moral, political, or otherwise) can be passed. This is what Rancière called "the equality of indifference," the leveling of subject matter and the introduction of all possible meanings into every level of the narrative. *Formally speaking*, *All the Conspirators*, in its irony, produces this equality by removing the protagonist as judge: what is equal is the unknowability of the socio-political environment into

which Gar has been plunged, the levelness of its mystery, menace, and foreignness. This is what leads Caroline Hau and Benedict Anderson, in their introduction to *All the Conspirators*, to say that the time of the novel is imbued with a concept of history as "happenstance and coincidence without the redeeming promise of coherent meaning."[19] History, in *All the Conspirators*, becomes incoherent because *the* subject has been removed; history becomes unintelligible because, in short, communication has been destroyed, because the medium through which communication and judgment can be passed has been transformed into a medium for their elimination.

B. The Insecure Text

Let us posit the following thesis: that *All the Conspirators*, in its abolition of both time and meaning, in addition to the product of their correlation, i.e. communication, leaves the reader absolutely free to decide on what categories and concepts are producible qua the text. This is what makes *All the Conspirators* what I termed in the introduction to this chapter an *insecure text*, a narrative that has abandoned the goal of producing any definite political message in favor of calling attention to the reader's capacities to think and decide on its political significance.

Again, Carline Hau and Benedict Anderson are helpful on this point. They ask, regarding *All the Conspirator*'s place in Carlos Bulosan's *oeuvre*: "How did Bulosan go from writing the paradigmatic Filipino American *Bildungsroman* [*America is in the Heart*] and, better yet, classic Filipino *litterature engagée* [*The Cry and the Dedication*] to a 'commercial' novel about an American tracking down a missing fellow-American in the Philippines?"[20] They see *All the Conspirators* as

[19] Caroline S, Hau and Benedict Anderson, "Introduction," *All the Conspirators*, xix – xx.
[20] *ibid*, xiv – xv.

a counterpart to *The Cry and the Dedication*, a novel whose main characters are Filipino guerillas, based loosely on the Huks, attempting to rendezvous with a Filipino *balikbayan* from America with money to fund the anti-imperialist resistance movement in post-war Philippines. The similarities it shares with *All the Conspirators* are evident, even at a cursory glance. At the end of *The Cry*, Hau and Anderson point out, Bulosan gestures towards a future in which history will reveal itself as the fulfillment of a revolutionary promise: the liberation of the Philippines from Empire and capital. *All the Conspirators* does just the opposite, however: in its abolition of time and communication, it reveals the contingencies of history and exposes in its turn the undecidability of the future, or rather, the threat that nothing will come of resistance and hope, that, like Gar, the socio-political and economic field that surrounds us is much too great to understand, and that in this overwhelming ignorance we will simply succumb to whatever decides our fate.

This, as I mentioned, is the novel's *internal* meaning, that is, the meaning that is locatable within the narrative itself. In this case, this meaning is the idea that meaning is impossible, and that any *a posteriori* signification of past events is not enough to save us from the mysteries with which Empire and capital harass us. *All the Conspirator*'s internal significance thus posits a tremendous amount of emphasis on the *objective* world. But what significance arises from the reading process itself? What categories and concepts are producible by the reader qua the immense objectivity of the novel's world?

If this objectivity amplifies what Lukács called the heterogeneity of its significance, it is still impossible to read the novel without in some ways forcing a comparative perspective between it and Bulosan's other novels. Let us assume for the moment that one comes across *All the Conspirators* with some prior knowledge of Bulosan's work (which is a safe assumption at that). *The generic and formal*

difference between All the Conspirators *and* The Cry and the Dedication *and* America is in the Heart *becomes the guiding principle of the reading process*. It is the difference, in other words, of which Hau and Anderson have written: the detective novel as against the *litterature engagée*. As we shall see, however, the generic differences (which are only apparently inescapable), because they operate the thought on *All the Conspirators* and of the political categories and concepts producible through it, actually create a kind of a force field in which the barriers that separate the qualities of either genre begins to crumble.

Sartre has defined *litterature engagée* as a literature that, as the "committed writer" knows, manifests words as "action," a literature that engages the reader as the "free" producer of ideas and concepts, and who in so doing enters into a relationship with the writer such that he or she "collaborate[s] in the production [of the latter's] work:" "the book does not serve my [the reader's] freedom; it requires it."[21] Sartre continues: the author "makes an appeal [to the readers'] freedom, and in order for his words to have any effect, it is necessary for the public to adopt them on their own account by an unconditioned decision. But in a collectively which constantly corrects, judges, and metamorphoses itself, the written work can be an essential condition of action, that is, the moment of reflective consciousness."[22] We have thus returned to the notion of the totalization, that non-delimitable common that is continuously undergoing a modification and is itself a product of the subject's thought—in other words, the common produced in and as the attributive becoming of the militant subject. It is in this way that the notion of the reader's freedom can be aligned with both focalization and attribution qua literature-as-thought. With respect to *All the Conspirators*, attribution, the reader's thought on

[21] Jean-Paul Sartre, *"What is Literature?" and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 37, 54 – 5.
[22] *ibid*, 140.

him or herself qua the non-delimitable common, happens through its dissolution of the barriers between its putative genre (the detective novel) and the reader's prior knowledge of Bulosan's body of work, of his *litteratures engagée*.

C. THE WHITE *BALIKBAYAN*

Before proceeding, I should advance the following clarification: that the objective situation referred to above as the *internal* world of the novel does not in any way correspond to the *external* world of the reader's thought. Objectivity, in other words, refers to the fictional representation and not to the objective conditions that *make* the reader's freedom, in Sartre's sense, a prerequisite for the writer-reader "pact." That said, it is now time to describe in what way the reader's freedom—or perhaps we should say, in keeping with the conceptual framework of this dissertation, the reader's thought on his or her freedom *as a reader*—can be conceptualized.

For Sartre, the totalization that surrounds the reader and which acts as the precondition for reading's manifest *praxis* must undergo a "permanent revolution."[23] It seems, then, that our analysis has run into an impasse: how do we conceive of the non-delimitable common as the source and result of the reader's thought on his or her becoming—as the preconditions for what may be called readerly freedom—if this permanent revolution, this totalization, is the *sine qua non* of this freedom itself? The problem is how to think the relation between the subject-hood of the reader (as a becoming) and the objective conditions that, if we take Sartre at face value, precede this becoming.

We can avoid this problem if we recall what I suggested is the constitutive feature of the subject in its becoming: the thinking of the present's void, i.e.

[23] *ibid*, 139.

introducing—thinking—into the contemporary situation that which negates it. In this sense, the divide between the objective and the subjective domains is removed; *the binary is thinkable only if a strict division between present and future are posited as well*—that is, if time, conceived as a linear trajectory, is maintained as the principle for a militant subject. *To think the abolition of time is to simultaneously think the dissolution of the difference between the objective and subjective domains*—this is the formula for the self-constitution of a militant subject that thinks *futurality*. And it is through this formula, qua *All the Conspirators*, that we can now think the emergence of the reader-subject as free.

As we have seen, *All the Conspirators* fulfills one of the basic coordinates of this formula: it abolishes time. A result of this abolition is that the novel's communicational mechanisms have also been eliminated. This freedom, in the novel's formal and stylistic characteristics, can thus be aligned with Frye's thesis that the detective novel refracts the police state's propaganda by focalizing the narrative through the novel's ironic mode, and that this irony signals the emergence of the reader's autonomous judgment, freed from the trappings of the State. Genealogically, however, we have also seen that the detective novel, and hard-boiled fiction specifically, is inseparable from the ideological regulation of American imperialism's State-building projects, centered upon the production and regulation of notions of a proper male Anglo-Saxon subject-hood against the "threats" posed by the heterogeneity of cultures and races being enclosed within the ever-expanding reach of the U.S.

We are now, however, ready to approach that thesis I advanced earlier: namely, that *All the Conspirators* elaborates both formal and genealogical elements without attempting to resolve their essential contradiction, and that this results in a text that ends up ironizing the very ideologico-genealogical sources of its genre and

thus of its methods of narration, in addition to the means by which it focalizes the reader through Gar. Because the reader, as I have hypothesized, is going to be familiar with Bulosan's previous work, there is already built into the reading process an element of irony: in keeping with Frye's definition, we can say that the reader is always aware of Gar's whiteness, and that his strangeness vis-à-vis Bulosan's other protagonists makes him a complete work of artifice. His whiteness, in other words, makes clear the stylization that *All the Conspirators*, as a detective novel, must necessarily exhibit. And it is a function of the ironic mode to give free reign to the reader to judge. In the case of Gar, the genealogical element arises quite explicitly and immediately: he is a *balikbayan* only because his mother and father owned a gold mine, themselves implicated in the imperial plunder that America's "incorporation" of the country enabled. Gar thus represents the ironic mode's "appeal" (in Sartre's words) to the reader's freedom to judge, in addition to the explication of *All the Conspirators*' ideological inseparability from American imperialism and capitalism. Moreover, we can say that through Gar the reader judges the genre itself, and through this judgment judges Empire.

Unlike *Viajero*, *All the Conspirators*, by focalizing its narrative through the *balikbayan*, allows the following to be thought: the very problem of a post-war return to the Philippines in order to, in the terms of the expectations generated by the detective novel's "normal" course of events, fix things, as it were. The stabilizing effects of the genre are thus precluded. Even Gar's sexuality is destabilized: although his remarks about Candy and, when he meets her, Tampa, Clem's daughter from a previous marriage, display the same kind of sexualized masculinity as the stereotypical hard-boiled detective, its alignment with the other traits that support this sexuality—violence, aggressivity, control—because they are

absent, does not take place. In *All the Conspirators*, there is no novelistic subject properly speaking, only a medium through which this judgment on Empire happens.

CHAPTER 7
"THE ONLY ANSWER WAS A COLLECTIVE RAGE"

"I long for your treason. . . ."
——Wilfrido Nolledo, *But for the Lovers*

We have now reached our final chapter. At this point, let us provide a summary of what we have learned from *Viajero* and *All the Conspirators*. In *Viajero*, we saw that José's use of the *bildungsroman* to tell the story of a political "becoming" qua the *balikbayan* ended up foreclosing upon the reader's ability to think, except, we may say, *in spite of the novel*, his or her becoming-Filipino. *Viajero*'s insistence on the irrefutability of the Filipino's return to the Philippines as the prerequisite for any radical politics displaced what is the basis for becoming-Filipino: the non-delimitable common, the constellational diaspora without an political ontological center. In *All the Conspirators*, on the other hand, we saw that Bulosan's exploitation of the detective novel's ironic mode leads to a situation in which the *balikbayan* figure ironizes the very notion of a return itself—critiquing both the U.S.' "salvation" of the Philippines from the Japanese and, more indirectly, the ideological trap created by this return, a trap into which *Viajero* has fallen: namely, the recapitulation of the problem faced by those who wish to separate radical democracy from imperial democracy, a task that must face the problem of the American return itself. This was the problem of revolutionary morality, as I called it in my reading of *Viajero*.

With regard to *All the Conspirators*, however, we must add the following caveat: that although it does abolish the forms of focalization that *Viajero* uses to delimit the political possibilities of the diasporic Filipino, it does not necessarily

offer up an alternative. The ironic mode's characteristic freedom-granting capabilities allows for a critique of Empire and its ideological snares, but if it can critique, by ironizing, what *Viajero* proposes, it can do so only, it seems, by default. *All the Conspirators* does not present the reader with a *positive* image of a becoming-Filipino—that is, where the *internal* and *external* meanings, as I termed them, producible qua the reader-novel relation correspond by doing more than simply exposing the liberty entailed in the latter. The reader, in the language used in the previous chapter, is *too autonomous*.

There must be some way that attribution be secured, but without sacrificing the reader's freedom to think. This means that there must be some way that communication be rendered, but without delimiting the reader's thought, the very consequence that abolishing communication sets out to avoid. We can call this a communication-without-communication, a sort of expressibility of an idea that initiates a true symbiosis between reader and novel, one that enables the reader to think his or her becoming-Filipino, one that induces the production of attribution under the terms of the concept of a non-delimitable common, and vice versa. This is where we encounter literature-as-thought. In this dissertation, I have used one novel as an exemplary instance of this symbiosis: Wilfrido Nolledo's *But for the Lovers*. In contrast to the ironic mode, it deploys what I will term *the baroque mode*.

7.1 Infinite Worlds

A. Narrative Density

Written in the late 1960s and published in 1970 while Nolledo was living in Iowa City and working as Editor of the *Iowa Review*, *But for the Lovers* covers much of the terrain familiar to us by now: the Occupation, the American return, the problem of finding allegiances in a Philippines torn apart by war, near famine, and economic disarray. Like the other two novels, however, *But for the Lovers* can be noted for the distinguished way in which it deploys form and style to accomplish its political edge.

The story revolves around an orphan, Alma, found in the streets after being raped by a Japanese soldier and unofficially adopted by Hidalgo, a former clown who used to entertain children in the countryside and who is nostalgic of the glories of the Philippines' Spanish past. Through him she befriends Amoran, a young guitar-playing boy. The novel, however, has numerous other characters, all of whom play an equally important role in the narrative. There is Major Shigura, a Japanese soldier who dreams of a pan-Asian unity freed from the West and led by the Japanese empire; Lieutenant Deogracias, the leader of a group of Filipino guerillas who plans to use the rumors of an American return as the impetus to start a total revolution against all imperialisms; and Captain Johnny Winter, an American pilot of a P-38 bomber who embarks upon a number of missions to Manila and is the subject of both Alma's dreams and Deogracias' revolutionary plans. *But for the Lovers* is distinguished from both *Viajero* and *All the Conspirators* in that it has no sustained point of focalization: the narrative enters and exits the paths of both its more central and marginal characters, eventually producing a narrative characterized more by the multiplicity of its perspectives than by any "hard" form

of focalization, the only apparent organizing "principle" being Alma, who begins the novel and ends it and who, along the way, becomes something of a medium through which the novel's thematics become expressible. This multiplicity of perspectives, of course, is not unique to this novel, especially if one wishes to place it within the category "postmodern" fiction in general, or more, specifically, in postmodern Filipino fiction. Jessica Hagedorn's *oeuvre* is only the most prominent example of this literary "type." What does make *But for the Lovers* unique is its linguistic density, the ornateness and complexity of its language; when combined with the oftentimes fantastical and hallucinatory quality of the novel's many stories, it emerges to create a narrative that is undoubtedly difficult—but one that has a purpose: to obstruct communication itself, such that what arises in place of a definite object is an elaborate web of descriptors that create the object's *idea* rather than *providing* it with its direct *representation*.

B. The Monad

Let us begin our analysis by defining what I mean by the baroque mode. I take as my primary source for the concept of the baroque Gilles Deleuze's *The Fold*, his book on Leibniz. Although I do not by any means intend to foreclose upon any other theoretical, political, or even aesthetico-historical conceptualization of the baroque by identifying Deleuze's book as *the* definitive statement on the category, I do want to make a note of the fact that his notion seems to theorize what the baroque has, in common parlance, become—not only is it a particular period of European artistic production, it is also a much more general descriptor of any style or modality characterized by what is usually an inordinate amount of ornateness, decorativeness, complexity, and density. Deleuze, indeed, says this much in the first sentence: "The Baroque refers not so much to an essence but rather to an

operative function, to a trait."[1] It is this trait, which, by implication, any modality (the full significance of which I will discuss), that I will now elaborate upon. The remainder of this section will be devoted to an extended rereading of Deleuze's book—a lengthy detour, but a necessary one.

The baroque, for Deleuze, is a way of theorizing the constitution of subjects by way of their interaction with both organic and inorganic matter. It is an *aesthetic*, properly speaking. Deleuze's objective is to think a single, great Unity comprised of individual "souls." The book, then, is merely one of Deleuze's many attempts to theorize *difference* and *unity*—or rather, their relation, one in which unity does not sacrifice difference by subordinating it to a higher logic, a taxonomic rigidity. Deleuze's ontology aims at creating a being that, in his and Felix Guattari's famous terminology, is not a being at all but a "becoming," a subject undergoing ceaseless transformations, one that cannot be tied down by a single determinative law. In more politically oriented terms, his project could be said to have been concerned with one thing: a politics that, while capable of organizing a unified field of action, did not also degenerate into a hierarchy, a topology of the common in which there are no leaders.

Accordingly, Deleuze begins his analysis with the individual subject's constitution, with the relation, more specifically, between the body and the soul. Each of these, he says, is comprised of "folds." Deleuze divides "folding" into two interrelated but entirely separate categories: elastic and plastic. Elastic forces define the force of cohesion, the infinite division into "small and smaller folds"[2] of a particular body (by "body," Deleuze is referring both to organic and inorganic bodies, i.e. matter). Plastic forces define the force of folding that "organize[s]

[1] Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold* (5th ed. Tr. Tom Conley. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2001), 3.
[2] *ibid*, 6.

masses," those that "transform raw matter into organic matter" by "preparing" the latter by way of a "motivating drive."[3] Once masses are organized, a higher form of constitution is needed: elastic and plastic forces only comprise what Deleuze calls "the lower level" of the baroque, the plane in which the body—and not the soul—resides.

This higher form of constitution is where an unfolding happens, where the forces in the lower level begin to construct organisms by inducing yet another kind of fold: the "cerebral fold." This is where the mind becomes active, where organisms are born: the mind is the site of organization, where the "soul" "becomes reasonable" by the apprehension of that which has and is taking place in the lower level. Deleuze calls this unfolding-folding process an "elevation, an exaltation," where "the theater of matter gives way to that of spirits or of God," the "animal or sensitive soul" born from its "[opening] onto an entire theater in which it perceives or feels according to its unity, independently of its organism [i.e. its body, the body is perceives as being its 'own'], yet inseparable from it." An immense unity is thus created where the soul and the cerebral folds become "entangled" with the body, with living matter, a perceptual and physical system in which the body's constitution of what is essentially *thought* is itself conditioned by the thought that thinks the unity of the thinking subject as both mind and body, soul and animal—a "vertiginous animality," as Deleuze calls it.[4]

Thought itself thus becomes the primary object of analysis, of how the subject not only arises from its encounter with the world, as Deleuze himself calls it, as it exerts its forces upon the subject, but also with how the subject *as subject* thinks this encounter—*thinks itself and the world as organic unities*. This thought

[3] *ibid*, 7.
[4] *ibid*, 11.

is capable of being conceptualized, then, inasmuch as the vertiginous animality of which it is a constitutive element is considered—that is, only if *unity* is established from the start as both a result and prerequisite for the constitution of the subject and the world. The perceiving thing, or the subject, and the thing perceived, or the object, thus unite in an entirely new relation.

At this point, we must pause and ask: what exactly is the object in this case? If the thinking subject thinks its encounter with the world as an organic unity and thinks itself qua the world as an organic unity as well, then the object is doubled—*it is both the subject and the world, both organic unities combined as a single, differentiated and organic manifold perceived by the subject*. Let us keep this in mind.

For Deleuze, the object is no longer simply an observed thing, static and immobile. It is an "objectile;" it fluctuates, and it "no longer refers its condition to a spatial mold—in other words, to a relation of form-matter—but to a temporal modulation that implies as much the beginnings of a continuous variation of matter as a continuous development of form."[5] This is another way of saying that the object perceived—both world and subject—are temporal *because they are in the process of continually becoming*, folding and unfolding themselves, entering into new relations and unities and engendering ever newer unities and thus new folds and unfoldings, organisms arising out of the recombinant structures of previous unities, *ad infinitum*. Spatially, these unities and organicities are imperceptible; to think them as a relation of form-matter abolishes their temporality by keeping in abeyance the transformations constitutive of this immense unity—it is to fix them in a given mold, to delimit them according to a hierarchy of forms rather than to liberate them by thinking the variations that constitute them.

[5] *ibid*, 19.

The subject, accordingly, is transformed into what Deleuze, qua Whitehead, calls a "superject"—that is, the subject that undergoes a profound transformation in its becoming alongside the objectile it perceives. The superject "will be what come to the point of view, or rather what remains in the point of view" of the perception of the objectile.[6] *The subject does not precede the object; rather it is what arises in the place where the perception of the object has taken place*. It is important to emphasize this point: *where perception has taken place*, i.e. what remains in the point of view. The subject, instead of being the determining agent of the encounter with the object, is an *effect*, an *outcome*—but not of an object that precedes it either; rather, the subject is an effect inasmuch as it is what arises from its encounter with the object, the *remainder* of the encounter that *has produced a new unity and organism*. The subject is not *the* point of view; it is the *place* in the point of view that thinks its encounter with the world.

If in this thought the object is both the subject and the world, this means that not only is the object doubled, as mentioned before; this means that the subject is doubled as well: it is both objectile and superject. The subject is the superject inasmuch as it is the *differentiation* that allows the thought on the encounter to occur. This is what Deleuze means when he says that it is what remains in the point of view: it is the remainder because it is the place of thinking marked by the difference immanent to the subject that allows it to think itself as part of the greater unity with the world that it thinks. In Deleuze's language, we can say that the thought constitutive of the subject differentiates the subject as thinking superject and as organic objectile unified (enfolded) with the world and its infinite folds: "It is not a variation of truth according to the subject, but the condition in which the

[6] *ibid*, 19 – 20.

truth of a variation appears to the subject."[7] Thought is equated with a constitutive differentiation; and it is this constitutive differentiation that allows organisms and unities to be thought in their continual variation, in their ceaseless becoming.

What are these organisms and unities? They are the famous Leibnizian monads. Before discussing the monad proper, however, let us clarify for a moment one key term that has thus far remained somewhat undefined: the fold. The fold can be best conceptualized as a potentiality, a single potentiality of a given thing that persists together with other potentialities, and whose unfolding is this potentiality's actualization in a given organism. Elastic forces maintain the cohesiveness of a given thing (whether organic or inorganic) as a manifold potentiality: the properties of that thing comprise its folds, each property manifesting a particular potentiality that could be actualized by combining with other properties to actualize a given mass. Plastic forces prepare these forces for organization: the elastic forces that constitute a manifold of potentialities give way to the plastic forces' actualization of a given set of these potentialities into a new organism and a new unity. The folds of a match are the roughness of the match head and the chemical composition that makes it flammable, which, when combined with the folds of the surface struck and the folds of the environment (its dryness, the amount of oxygen available, etc.), create fire, whose folds eat up the folds of oxygen and the folds of the head of the match, during which folds combine and unfold to actualize new things, from a burnt match head, to ash, etc. This is a sequence in which elastic forces (the composition of the match, for instance) give way to plastic forces (the igniting of fire), which, in the folds contained therein, also comprise elastic forces (those chemical properties that maintain a fire for a given amount of time, for instance), and so on. It is a sequence of variations, but elastic

[7] *ibid*, 20.

forces do not *pass into* plastic forces. Rather, due to the composition of unties characteristic of a given point in the sequence, a "higher order" is actualized. This order contains elastic forces that maintain its unity and which, because it enters into relation with another manifold of potentialities, are potentialities of another sort; these then become actualized in another order.

Cerebral folds, then, are what allow the striking of the match, its ignition, its burning, and its dying out to be perceived: the process *becomes* process by the subject who thinks the unity of this process through the infinite variation of forces that comprise it, a subject that, by thinking the match, the fire, and the ash, thinks itself as the observer qua match, fire, and ash and as the thinker who thinks this observation qua the world. All of these becomings comprise an infinite and manifold variability.

C. The Rational Double

This is why Deleuze calls the world an "infinite series," which "cannot be separated from an infinity of variations that make it up."[8] What is the monad's place in this infinite series? "As an individual unit each monad includes the whole series; hence it conveys the entire world, but does not express it *without expressing more clearly a small region of the world, a 'subdivision,' a borough of the city, a finite sequence*. Two souls do not have the same order, but neither do they have the same sequence or the same clear or enlightened region."[9] We are clearly in familiar territory. This recalls what we have been saying about the common: a subject's capacity to destroy the common's delimitability is predicated upon the thought of every other subject's equal ability to do so in their own region, site, and location as

[8] *ibid*, 25.
[9] *ibid*, 25.

well. The monad expresses clearly the region it inhabits; the form of thought that it exhibits when thinking the unity and organicity of the world in the clarity of its region is what Leibniz called "sufficient reason," which *names the concept* of the world and its infinite variations. The result is a "compossible" world, a world that is "[reconstituted] over and again one and the same, infinitely infinite, converging series." The differences represented by each monad in the clear region specific to it thus "expresses the analytical extension of one series into another . . . Just as each monad conveys the entire world, so then a single notion can no longer pertain for one subject, and subject-monads will now be distinguished only by their inner manner of expressing the world."[10] The compossible world, then, is the concept given by the monad through sufficient reason to a world that is thought as an organic totality, an infinite series of foldings and unfoldings, of varying potentialities and their equally varying actualization.

This compossible world, however, is comprised, in its concept, of both clear and obscure regions, their intensities contingent upon the place that the monad inhabits: "At the limit . . . all monads possess an infinity of compossible minute perceptions, but have differential relations that will select certain ones in order to yield clear perceptions proper to each. In this way every monad, as we have seen, expresses the same world as the others, but nonetheless owns an exclusive zone of clear expression that is distinguishable from every other monad: its *subdivision*."[11] This gives us a clearer idea of the subject's relation to the world. If indeed the subject is differentiated from itself in its thought as both subject and object, as both the observer (superject) and object-in-the-world (objectile), then the world acquires a different meaning: it is the site of what might be called the subject-precipitate, the

[10] *ibid*, 50.
[11] *ibid*, 90.

leftover or remainder of the differential that induces the thinking being that thinks the variations *from which it has momentarily fallen*. As objectile, the subject as concrete existence must necessarily remove itself from the world of infinite variations if it can become the superject and think the world in its unity; but once this removal has taken place, the world ceases to be the series of infinite variations that the subject once occupied as objectile and instead becomes what I will term a *rational double* of itself—rational insofar as it belongs within the domain of sufficient reason, and double insofar as it becomes *the concept* of the world, which is not the world that the subject inhabits, but the world that it *thinks while inhabiting it*. This rational double of the world, in other words, *is the concept of the concrete, infinite variations that allows the subject to think unity while also contemplating itself in it.* The world as rational double of itself is thus inextricable from the subject's differentiation.

Moreover, because this thought implies the thought of other monads—i.e. other subject-precipitates who themselves think the world and its rational double—the world is not just rationally doubled, it is rationally "infinitized," so to speak, extended to an infinite number of potential worlds that nonetheless belong to one single organic unity. We can say, following Deleuze's terminology, that within the world there are an infinity of compossible worlds.

Does this mean that these worlds radically diverge from the one that is thought as a totality? Deleuze calls one type of divergence "incompossibility;" it serves as the concept for what is excluded from the compossible series.[12] Are these *rational infinitudes* analogous to incompossibilities? In a way, they are. They point us towards a direction that Deleuze merely hinted at towards the end of his book: that we can be said to live in a Leibnizian age only insofar as there are an

[12] *ibid*, 63.

infinite number of foldings, unfoldings, and refoldings. And then he qualifies this statement by suggesting that, on the contrary, "the world is now made up of divergent [i.e. incompossible] series . . . the world is unable to contain the entire world as if in a closed circle." The monad, Deleuze says, "astraddle over several worlds, is kept half open as if by a pair of pliers."[13] The entire book has been up until this point dedicated to elaborating the foundations of a monadology; this apparently self-subverting conclusion, then, can be read as an indication of what Deleuze was preparing all along but never (for whatever reason) properly discussed: *what it means to think an incompossibility as both a divergence from and a part of, inasmuch as it is thought through, the monad's organic, totalized world*. One way to think this thought on incompossibility has just been provided: the world as rational infinitude. Why is this important? Because incompossibility is absolute negativity, the precondition for a thought on the militant subject. But there is a second way to think incompossibility, and it belongs more properly to the domain of language itself—in the concept of predication.

D. Against Representation I: "Predication"

Deleuze, qua Leibniz, posits predication against attribution: the former, for him, expresses "above all a relation and an event," whereas the latter marks a defined linguistic territory in which the subject is *stabilized* by an attribute, obeying a type of hierarchical logic in which the copula assumes the role of the verb that the subject, in becoming stabilized by the attribute, takes on—the subject *is* walking, *is* moving, *is* this or that. Predication, on the contrary, is "an act, a movement, a change, and not *the state of travel*."[14] The state of the subject attributed *as*

[13] *ibid*, 137.
[14] *ibid*, 53, emphasis added.

something, as doing something—this is what Deleuze says Leibniz removes by providing a "Baroque grammar." The "predicate is a verb;" more properly, it "is the proposition itself." Deleuze says that the Stoics made a significant "accomplishment" in this area: they made "the event neither an attribute nor a quality, but the incorporal predicate of a subject of the proposition (not 'the tree is green,' but 'the tree greens . . .')."[15] What is important to remember is that Deleuze defines predication *as the proposition*: predication *is not a form of being, but rather a form of thought on being as event, as process, as movement and becoming*. Predication is inseparable from the thought and language that expresses this eventality.

This is why "perception has no object," why "[c]conscious perception has no object and does not even refer to a physical mechanism of excitation that could explain it from without: it refers only to the exclusively physical mechanism of differential relations among unconscious perceptions that are comprising it within the monad."[16] What perception is is a thought on the manifold variations that comprise the thing perceived, those differential relations created by elastic and plastic forces and which create organisms. The relation between thinking subject and thought object is submitted to the infinitude of differences that render attribution impossible: neither subject nor object are stable entities, so to speak, because both are constituted by the idea of the world's variational flux that defines the baroque mode of thought, or in other words, the world's rational infinitude.

Before defining how exactly the baroque mode offers up a thought against representation (the concern of this section, after all), we have to discuss the relation between predication and attribution, since, obviously, and upon a cursory glance, I

[15] *ibid*.
[16] *ibid*, 93.

have deployed both apparently incompatible concepts in order to advance my claims.

E. Against Representation II: the Attribute

The first question that comes to mind is: is the attribution that Deleuze speaks of the same kind of attribution that we have thus far been describing qua becoming-subject and becoming-militant? Recall that I derived the concept of attribution from Negri's reading of Spinoza. While I do not think that, for the present purposes, a long disquisition on the relation between Spinozian and Leibnizian thought is particularly helpful, I do think it useful to note that, as is well known, Deleuze was himself heavily indebted to Spinoza as a philosophical "teacher." With this in mind, let us restrict ourselves to quoting a single passage from Deleuze book on Spinoza, called *Expressionism in Philosophy*: "Attributes are infinite forms of being, unlimited, ultimate, irreducible formal reasons; these forms are common to God whose essence they constitute, and to modes which in their own essence imply them. Attributes are Words expressing unlimited qualities; these qualities are as it were involved in the limits of the finite. Attributes are expressions of God; these expressions of God are univocal, constituting the very nature of God as *natura naturans*, and involved in the nature of things of *natura naturata* which, in a certain way, re-expresses them in its turn."[17] This analysis is very similar to the one Negri provides; what distinguishes Deleuze's, however, and which is why it is important to us, is his emphasis on the relation between the attribute and expression, or what he calls the Spinozian Word. As we saw, predication is a *form* of thought that allows the world to be thought as a rational

[17] Gilles Deleuze*, Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (Tr. Martin Joughin. New York: Zone Books, 1992), 49.

infinitude. Deleuze, in this passage, also describes the attribute as a form—a *common* form. It too serves to designate a thought on unity, one that, moreover, is a thought on this form *as expression*, as the mutual expressiveness of the divine substance and the earthly modes.

Representation implies a hierarchy that Deleuze wishes to abolish; it presupposes an *a priori* subject's incarnation in language, through which access to this subject then becomes possible. Expressionism removes the relation between represented thing (subject), representer (language), and representee (the "consumer" of the representation who "reads" the subject's existence through language) by positing a unified field of immanent "expressibilities." What the attribute enables is a form of thought *on the common itself*, on what places the modes within a community of modes while allowing their differences to be simultaneously thought—the relation, in other words, between difference and unity. Spinozism, for Deleuze, is "the assertion of a *community of form* and the positing of a *distinction of essences*," that "creatures differ from God in *essence and existence*" while "God has something in common with creatures *formally*."[18] Form is thus one, while essence is multiple. This is the basic formula for a Spinozist attribution that demolishes the authority of a single essence transmitting itself across and through all signs; attribution is a thought on *formal commonality and essential infinitude.*

The attribution that Deleuze speaks of in *The Fold*, then, is a much more deficient concept: as the stabilizer and qualifier of the copula, it posits a subject that preexists the attribute, the relation between them created only by also introducing the copula as a *logical unifier of the subject and its predicate*. In this sense, *being can be said to be nothing more than the legitimator of the hierarchy of representation: something is inasmuch as the subject does not become, but persists,*

[18] *ibid*, 48, emphasis added.

its attributes mere qualifiers of an unchanging essence, the ever-represented thing of representation.

An immanent plane, then, is an *attribution-predication*: the community of formal differences expressing an essential infinitude, the thought of which is possible only by thinking the rational infinitude of the world, the world devoid of a single determinative essence.

F. Against Representation III: Incompossibility

This brings us to a final way of thinking against representation, and which will concretize the *political* implications of the form of thought I have described as attribution-predication: that of the incompossible.

Thus far, we have seen that, in the baroque mode:

a. the subject is differentiated from itself and is the *precipitate* of perception, both perceiving subject and perceived object;

b. the object, or objectile, is unstable, subordinate to the temporality that marks the infinite variations of which it consists;

c. representation is annulled, attribution-predication being the form of thought that places the subject-object relation on an immanent plane, expression taking its place and producing the *idea* of the *formal* commonality of the world of irreducible differences; and

d. the world is rationally infinitized, the world that the subject inhabits as concrete thing (object) and perceiver (subject), the thought on which initiates an infinitization by way of, first, its existence as concrete unity (the world of the subject-as-object) and, *as such*, as *concept* of itself (the world of the subject-as-subject); and second, the *idea* of other perceiving

> subjects, i.e. the monads, who themselves rationally double the world, an infinite variability of *concrete concepts* that create the world anew.

If perception indeed has no object, and there is no such thing as representation (unless we want to resurrect hierarchical thought), what then happens to the world as concrete concept?

I suggested earlier that what Deleuze aimed to do in *The Fold* was to suggest ways of thinking an incompossibility as both a divergence from and a part of the monad's organic, totalized world. *Formally speaking*, Deleuze has described the general schematics for thinking incompossibilities; this is what he means when he says that, though we are now at an age in which the monad straddles multiple worlds and leaves itself vulnerable to being pried open (as if by pliers), a conclusion that he refuted throughout the rest of the book, the world is still, because of the infinity of foldings, unfoldings, and refoldings that constitute it, Leibnizian. The world as rational infinitude opens up this form into the concept of which, admittedly, this dissertation has been absent in the last two chapters: *absolute negativity*.

What kind of perception takes place, as it were, qua the world as rational infinitude? The world is made up of infinite concrete subdivisions, in Deleuze's terms, in addition to infinite concrete concepts. The material world and its concrete concepts are extended to infinity. Perception without an object, because it is thought as attribution-predication, entails *the disappearance of both the world and subject as objects*; what takes their place is the idea of the infinite variations that comprise the world and the subject-as-object *united as common forms*, an immanent plane of differences in which *expression* has taken hold precisely because there is no single determinative "instance" governing the forms themselves. The subject's place in this immanence is that of the perceiver who thinks the unity-difference

relation *as a concept that is entirely contingent upon the subject's "subdivision," on his or her place in the world as both perceived thing and perceiver*. If the subject is indeed the precipitate of perception, then the subject "takes hold" only insofar as the perception specific to the baroque mode happens—that is, when the thought on the common infinitely divided by its infinite essences induces this precipitation. But what is the nature of this precipitation? As the site of thought, the subject arises as the partial fixing of the world, as the removal of thought *from the world in order to properly think it*.

This distanciation, however, does not *clarify* the world; rather, it *multiplies* it, *infinitizes* it. And it does so according to the idea of other multiplications and infinitizations, or in other words, other subject who themselves have removed themselves from the world. But these subjects themselves *are objects*—they therefore *remain subject to attribution-predication*. *They cannot, we must say, be represented—they can only be thought in their immanent equality to the world and to other subject-objects in their inherent and essential difference*. The thinking subject's relation to the world and to the common is thus to *de-represent them*; it is to *force them into a relation of expressibility*.

Incompossibility, absolute negativity, emerges, then, *as a constitutive element of thought*, because of the following prerequisite: that the thinking subject is essentially *apart* from other subjects, which exist, when thought happens, as objects, as concrete concepts. It is not just a matter of there being obscure regions of perception, as Deleuze calls it; it is more a matter of these obscure regions' expression of the most common "thing" of all: *the form of the world as infinitude, the substances of which remain in their essentially discreet regionalities*. *And this form is thinkable only from the position of that which is not of the world: the subject.* The startling conclusion we must reach is that *the most radical negativity*

of the world—that which does not belong to it—is nothing less than the thinking subject itself, the one who thinks the common as world, who thinks the world as rational infinitude, who thinks rational infinitude as the form of thought. *The subject's separation from the world negates it; it is a distanciation that is tantamount to a renunciation of the world as is; it is a renunciation of hierarchies and representations, the thought against which initiates the becoming of a subject that is absolute negativity manifest*. *This subject is incompossibility itself*.

7.2 Literature-as-Thought: Absolute Negativity Actualized

A. Literary *praxis*, Revisited

Conceptualizing the reader-subject, as we saw in Chapter 4, is contingent upon conceiving of literature as a form of thought. This in its turn is dependant upon conceiving of such a thought as the reader-subject's capacity to think of him or herself as being included in the field of relations that the literary work presents. This is the thought on literature as a function of *praxis*.

And what is *praxis*, or work, qua literature-as-thought? It is the negativity that literature introduces into thought as the expression of a new community, of its *self-presentation* beyond the delimitations imposed by capital—namely, those of communication, in which addressor and addressee occupy fixed positions in a spatio-temporal grid that marks out the territories of production and consumption. Futurality sends into this grid absolute negativity, the extra-temporal dimension that produces the idea of a new organization of space that exceeds both knowledge and being—a non-knowledge (insofar as knowledge describes the consensus' limitation of thought) and non-being (insofar as being designates the ontological sphere of

what is, as opposed to *what cannot be*) that sends the entire apparatus of communication into disarray and brings about—actually summons—a new community, a new common, in thought.

B. "A HEMORRHAGE OF HISTORY:" A FUTURE PEACE

How, then, does *But for the Lovers* accomplish this multifaceted production of the reader-subject? Through the novel's typology, which posits relations between temporality, political subjects, and language.

Four characters express the typological axis around which the novel is organized: history's, and, in another vein, time's capacity to structure the meaning of events, which in the novel's case is the struggle to make sense of the Philippines during the closing months of the second world war. These four characters are: Hidalgo, Major Shigura, Lieutenant Deogracias, and Alma. Let us distinguish the first three characters' typological function first.

1. Hidalgo. The temporality he expresses is one of a pure pastness, the historicality he represents being filtered through his nostalgia for the Philippines' Spanish past. And not only that—this nostalgia is a history marked by its length and breadth, its supposed rootedness in the Philippines, as though an unchanging earth that defines and contours the country and its people. When he finds Alma, he anoints her with a "benediction:" he calls her "*hija*." Here is how Nolledo describes the moment: "Four hundred years of Spanish romance caressed the word."[19] His favorite spot is Intramuros, the old walled city, the first Spanish capital of old Manila, established by Legazpi, the same conquistador mentioned in José's *Viajero*. He thinks of his wanderings towards Intramuros as being driven by his "*querencia*," his homesickness or longing. He thus bypasses Intramuros'

[19] Wilfrido Nolledo, *But for the Lovers* (Normal: Dalkey Archive Press, 1994), 51.

contemporary function: the Japanese used the walled city as their headquarters in Manila, in addition to housing prisoners of war and any Philippine dissenters. This also means that Hidalgo remains obstinate to the ideas of an American liberation:

> The American Air Force had sought out the particular landmark to bomb, lingeringly, almost religiously, with precision and contempt. Filipinos would cheer every air raid siren; they celebrated each bombing as they did the feast days of their saints; not Hidalgo. If this was his last season on the stage [recall that he is a vaudevillian performer], Intramuros was his last sanctuary in this city, perhaps in the whole country. Even this ridiculous war could not take that away from him. *Haber*, why should he choose between the Gringo Roosevelt and the Celestial Hirohito? Both were moths flickering over the Castilian candle. . . . History only breathed in the Walled City, and despite its historical brutalization, Intramuros still belonged to the Spain of El Cid.[20]

Whereas Filipinos long for an American-led liberation of the country, Hidalgo still longs for the color and beauty of a "Hispanic Asia."[21] The status of the Filipino, then, is remarkably complex here: Hidalgo is nostalgic for that period in history when he, a (self-described?) "Spaniard" (whether he is actually from Spain or is a *mestizo* is never disclosed), was the only *legitimate Filipino*, i.e. those with pure Spanish blood either from Spain or born in the Philippines from Spanish parents. And yet, the passage I have quoted differentiates Hidalgo from the "Filipinos" who celebrate the Americans' bombings of Intramuros. They are not described as *other* Filipinos; they are simply Filipinos, a (racial, national, patriotic, historical) category

[20] *ibid*, 30.
[21] *ibid*.

to which Hidalgo does not belong, or does not see himself belonging to—his allegiance to Spain describes another Philippines altogether, *one that is not beholden to the modern Empires but is instead historicized by its Spanish past*.

Hidalgo equates true history with Spain, and posits this truth against what are essentially fleeting historical events, ones that are, however, capable of destroying everything he cares about. He thus splits time into two. On the one hand, there is the time of Spanish Philippines, a genuine historical time that is *intelligible* in the environment, in the buildings and colors (he often describes his surroundings in terms of their chromatic significance) infused with meaning and *historicized* memory. On the other, there is the time of the present, of the post-Spanish period that began with America's conquest and reached a new stage with the Japanese Occupation, and whose meaning is entirely different: as against the Spanish period's resplendence and richness, there is the drabness (the "red and brown" of the Japanese uniforms against the "polychromatic" brilliance of Intramuros' walls[22]) of the modern Empire, the scramble for riches and military and political strength a weak flame to Spain's *established* and *affective* hold over the country. This *historical weakness*, this *bankruptcy of meaning and significance*, however, is able to reduce everything that gives historical meaning to the Philippines to dust.

Hidalgo's nostalgia posits time against non-time, history against a-history, meaning against meaninglessness. His pre-modern romance, in short, is the only way he can create for himself the idea of a stable socio-political entity: the Philippines as non-State, as imperial appendage and outpost to a once-thriving Spanish empire. Hidalgo seeks to align history, temporality, and meaning, their harmony securing for him a social environment in which significance is still

[22] *ibid*.

thoroughly intelligible in the world. It is a world, oddly enough, *without Filipinos*. If indeed he cannot describe himself as a Filipino, which only serves to delimit those who remain tied to the imperial *present*, then he acquiesces, nonetheless, to the idea that time cannot be reversed, that he cannot return to that era when his ethno-racial class was the only true Filipino one: there is no indication that Hidalgo considers himself to be any more legitimately Filipino than anyone else. He is simply *Spanish*. When focalized through Hidalgo, the novel implies a time in which Filipinos do not exist: they are simply *sublimated* into a hierarchy in which Spanish-ness becomes the *attribute* by which significance, and, by extension, history and time, are possible.

2. Major Shigura. He presents the novel's most extreme case of temporality; his is diametrically opposed to Hidalgo's vision of a history and time replete with meaning: his dream of a pan-Asian collectivity heralded by the Japanese rising sun is thoroughly anarchic at its heart. Here is a remarkable passage:

> You have not seen Manchuria. You have not seen China—the butchery, the beheadings. Our war goes on like the growing of rice. Rice is at the bottom of everything, from the day we exhale to the night we fail. . . . Once, in our fetishistic heyday, a student of Buddha burned down one of Gautama's [founder of Buddhism] temples. I think it was a deliberate act of absolution through violence. But such an extroverted truth can only be called madness. Yet that curtailer of a cult spoke for us all. Part of every soldier is an assassin. Let me remind you that the world has been like colossi with arms of purification. I, too, am an assassin, *ne*? I would like to purge the army. If only there were a million like myself who could

> disband that collective strength by sheer ineptness, by absolute abandonment, perhaps contumely of scapegoats in uniform will lose the war and win dignity. If some vast protest exist in the navy, in the air force, and in the secret police, perhaps Japan will revivify—glory? But these infiltrations are hornets without sting and the army will never realize until very late that I was its greatest enemy. I, and this monumental disenchantment with that we are fighting for. Therefore it remains your task, you out there in the honeycombed bunkers: to muffle the artillery, outflank the infantry, sink the battleships, shoot down the bombers. I wish all the armies of the world would collide for the last time and quash the dogs of war. After such a tournament, it may be that the citizen long hobbling on the front (and what is this front but only the backdoor of man's intentions?) may come back to a society without government, to a state without statesmen, to a republic without democracy, to a house without lords. Meanwhile, the stupidity does on that we lovingly call free spirit. Ah, to be free of the human spirit![23]

This tirade, a sort of prolepsis/fantasy on the apocalypse of all States and governments, comes at a significant moment: Shigura has already realized that, in these final months of the war, an American return is inevitable. The destruction of the Philippines' social, economic, and political foundations, the burning of Tondo (which happens at the end of the novel), the atrocities, the death toll across the Pacific, even the atomic destruction of Nagasaki and Hiroshima—all of these are figured and prefigured in Shigura's soliloquy. It is an immense annihilation through which the world must pass in order to reach some final, lasting peace.

[23] *ibid*, 247.

Shigura accepts Japan's imminent defeat, *but exempts himself from all culpability, distances himself from Japan*. He is *the* novel's traitor-figure.

This is how he sees himself:

> Between transmission and execution, between order and obedience, Major Shigura was confident he was beyond guilt or glory. In the event of an Allied victory—and the handwriting had dripped down on the other side of the wall—the war trials would, with evangelical wrath, pursue the taint of culpability to their visible roots: Tojo, Yamashita, along with all those warlords that had presumed too much in their 'war of expansion.' As a coup de grace, the Emperor himself would be stripped of his celestial robes. In Nazi Germany, the identifiable beast was Hitler, whose certified infamy would soon keep historians busy. *Der Führer* would join all the infamous exterminators of czarist and Stalinist Russia; and *Sieg Heil!* he would go down in the final accounting with Nero, Caligula, Attila and Genghis Khan. But Japan's own Sphinx, enlisting, then exhuming its aliases and despoilers, would survive Allied technology, would subvert man's very theology—to reassess, reconstruct, regroup tomorrow's traumas, the future's feudal fangs for a neo-Nipponese rising sun, for a more beautiful harvest moon, and . . .
>
> This very minute, the Sphinx (or the Manila moon?) was transfusing: through an alias—Major Shigura.[24]

Unlike Hidalgo, what is most significant to Shigura is what is most *unintelligible* and *indiscernible*, those nameless masses who bombed Pearl Harbor, those

[24] *ibid*, 286.

indecipherable Sphinxes of the apocalypse who stand mute and perplexing, confounding all aspects of human understanding. Those who are most significant are the most *a-historical*, those who remain intractable to history's recorders—*to language itself*. *They survive every judgment against the State*. Shigura, at this moment, is the *alias* of this silent and faceless apocalypse. Shigura's distanciation from Japan happens as a separation from every significance given to war by the State and, by extension, any international law that might prosecute him in the aftermath: his mission is to accelerate violence beyond every conceivable value. He sees himself as the bringer of destruction; *it is a form of attribution* when he defines himself as an alias of the Sphinx. And only he possesses the answer to the following riddle: how, despite the State's destruction, is it still possible to posit a non-Western order headed by Japan? Japan can only name an ethnicity, the bearer of the most non-Western tradition, due to centuries of isolation, and as such is capable of leading every other category of Asian to its ultimate destiny: a pan-Asian collectivity freed from the conquest of the West.

But this destiny is a-historical; it can be meaningful only as a time, perhaps paradoxically, that bears marks of a determinism. Although he repudiates the efficacy of Imperial Japan's war of expansion, itself described as a form of pan-Asianism by Japan's top military designers and propagandists, the second world war remains an essential step: it is the apocalypse that will bring about, in its rubble, the conditions that make it possible to realize the new pan-Asian order. Shigura will take advantage of this destruction and hasten its effects.

If the novel's focalization of Shigura has brought us closer to absolute negativity than any other figure thus far, it has also revealed an error similar to the identitarianism of José's *Viajero*: that racial belongingness still needs to establish a hierarchy. In *Viajero*, this hierarchy was constructed along a ethno-political and

spatial axis, the diaspora having to return "home" in order to actualize its potential radicalism; here, a hierarchy is created along a purely ethnic one *that attempts to repudiate history and find significance in its intractability towards judgment and language*. Shigura fails, however; if Japan names an ethnicity, a name that is the result of a self-designation in what is otherwise a cipher of meanings, and inasmuch as this naming takes place along a quasi-deterministic concept of time, then Shigura's invocation of an ethnic purity is possible only by abstracting it from the very concrete history to which it belongs, *attempting, without consequences, to extract from Japan's imperial mission the ethnic and racial dimensions that are in fact inseperable from its political, economic, and military designs, those very things that Shigura deplores*. He abstracts, in other words, ethnicity, *as though it were thinkable, in his pan-Asianism, apart from Empire and the State*. Shigura's attribution, then, bears within itself, despite all of its anarchic rage, the problems of hierarchization: it returns in the form of a *temporality* that sees the present *as absolutely indispensable to realizing his dream*.

The trick is to posit the abolition of all values without recuperating the continuity of time, and to think the contradiction of eroding the foundations of an ethno-political name while maintaining its importance as an organizer of anti-imperial and anti-Statist subjects.

3. Lieutenant Deogracias. The leader of a Marxist guerilla unit, he is ordered by the rebel high command to escort Captain Jonas Winters (Captain Johnny), shot down by Japanese guns during a bombing mission in the P-38 he pilots, from Baguio (where his plane wrecked) to Manila. This would lead to a second phase of his mission, which the "Manila high command" describes as "the exploitation of a metaphor,"[25] i.e. the exploitation of the idea of an American-led

[25] *ibid*, 192.

Philippine liberation as promised by MacArthur. Captain Johnny, then, is the figure and name of an imminent Philippine freedom from the Occupation, paraded around the towns along the way as the sign of this inevitability. Along the way, Deogracias takes Winters along a virtual tour of the Philippines, commenting thusly:

> the static quality of mountain culture is emphasized in both rice terraces and design of the Igorot dress. Jonas, bear with me; study the intervals in evidence. Neither terrace nor cloth of the Ifugao has changed in aeons. Philippine life—as the Ifugao designs would have us believe—has but one movement and that is round and round a vicious circle, even as the Ifugao [the people of the Ifugao region in Northern Luzon] dance. Terrace and cloth dance, my friend, yet do not move. But that is a myth begun by Spaniards, encouraged by Americans; and the Filipino is past Ifugao, beyond Torquemada, Tojo—even MacArthur. The tabernacle is Filipino . . . tomorrow![26]

This last exclamation is significant: coming at the end of a disquisition against the myth of circularity—that Filipinos have no history—Deogracias invokes the Judeo-Christian concept of the soul and/or holiness. The tabernacle, as the host of the Covenant or of the human soul, is invoked as the *being* of the Filipino; the Filipino is thus, somehow, the shell of a much greater purity and sanctity, *but only in the future, i.e. "tomorrow!"*

What is this purity? Deogracias elaborates it in his notion of *taoism*, *tao* being the tagalog word for "people." It is essentially a populist theory that describes the true Filipino as "the legitimate heir of the *indio* commonality," that "only those executed in the past and suffering today could be deemed Filipino." This excludes "any bureaucrat," "even the most insignificant clerk." The Filipino is

[26] *ibid*, 193.

"he who starved, he who smiled for centavos, he whose children were born deformed and nurtured in discontent. In short, *taoism* was next to Filipinism, and this nepotism, if one were to extend credibility a gap farther, led to godliness."[27] Deogracias' time is a messianic one (he calls the return of the Americans the "Second Coming"): replete with meaning, it is significant only insofar as the notion of progress is allowed to imbue every event with purpose, which allows Deogracias to delimit the concept of the Filipino and the *tao*, in addition to positing their correlation. The tabernacle, as Filipino, is tomorrow because Deogracias has produced an alternative history marked by the forward thrust of a teleology defined by the *tao*'s vindication: a free Philippines populated by next-to-godly people, a collectivity without, apparently, hierarchies.

The path towards reaching this heavenly state is, however, based upon a dissimulation: Captain Johnny will be presented as the sign of liberation, one that will be based not upon what he actually represents—the American return—but by the activation of the *tao*'s desires, fantasies, and anticipations—that of *liberation*, pure and simple. Deogracias' mission is to *fill* the messianic time of the *tao* with the *metaphor of liberation*—and what it metaphorizes is the revolution of the *tao*, *mobilized and organized*. The hope is that this metaphorization will happen; there is nothing to guarantee that the idea of liberation is capable of igniting a purely autonomous and self-sufficient Filipino revolution against all Empires. Deogracias' messianic time is thus filled with contingencies, which is why Hidalgo disagrees with him.

It is worth noting that the passage I quoted above is focalized through Hidalgo's criticism; though it maintains its ideological edge, it is still nonetheless framed as a critical evaluation of Deogracias' version of populism. Hidalgo's

[27] *ibid*, 204.

charge is that the latter knows nothing of the people, that he is thoroughly idealistic. Hidalgo is right, of course. But his charge is based upon, as we saw, his Eurocentric vision of history: progress, he claims, is impossible in Deogracias' notion of the *tao*, whose immanent autonomy Hidalgo contests: for him, the *tao* can never be capable of instituting change; it will always sit on the head, as if a "topee" [*sic*], of a country's ruler.[28]

At this point, it should be clear that the two differing notions of Filipino-ness are stake in this disagreement: Hidalgo's Filipino, sublimated into a Spanish-centered historicality, against Deogracias' self-actualizing, autonomous and *suffering* Filipino. What they share is that the meaning of the Filipino is submitted to a timeline in which significance comes, more or less, *from elsewhere*: Spain in Hidalgo's version, and America in Deogracias'. For the latter, however, Filipino-ness comes as the *self-recognition* of the *tao* as the tabernacle of freedom and godliness (and thus of history's vindication of their suffering); the metaphor is *exploitable* precisely because it serves as nothing but the *chance* that this recognition can be activated. The American return is thus delegitimized in favor of a "revolution from below."

Why, then, does the novel discredit Deogracias by killing him off (he is crushed in a falling building towards the end)? Because his notion of Filipino-ness is delimited, because he posits an *apodictic* identity of the autonomous, revolutionary collectivity. Not only that—he does so by *passing through the meaning that the American return carries with it*. Though he delegitimizes it, he still relies on its ability to invoke freedom and liberty; the hope is that these ideas are seen not only as a fraud when incarnate in the metaphor of the American solider, but that they are somehow *universally intelligible signs that can be*

[28] *ibid*.

appropriated as the foundation for revolution. We are thus left with the same problem as that of *Viajero*: freedom American-style, even when it is recognized as an imperial project, carries with it a pure and essential spirit that functions as the democratic principle by which true liberation can be achieved. The Filipino, in Deogracias' vision of history, is significant only when the messianic time of progress is given ideological weight by this quandary.

What these three characters express is the novel's development of a *typology of the future*, which is marked by a peace that is, a) historically replete with significance, b) marked by its absolute negation of every value cherished in the present, and c) initiated by a revolution of the people. We have seen how these different concepts of time and history relate to language; the primary means by which Hidalgo, Shigura, and Deogracias define this typology is by evacuating meaning from a given set of signs: the Filipino for Hidalgo; national and military allegiance for Shigura; and freedom and democracy for Deogracias.

The problem is how they fill the void they have created; the problem is how they posit meaning and significance again, how they *delimit* the politics they have elaborated, each one providing us with a coordinate by which absolute negativity and, along with it, a militant diasporic reader-subject can be thought: the abolition of the Filipino and its return as organizer of political ontologies, and the introduction of the present's absolute negativity as the excess of all meaning, of the creation of a new language (as Shigura desires). The problem *is a problem of hierarchical time*; each one of these characters end up positing some sort of determinism *from above*. Moreover, in each of their own ways, these characters, by positing this determinism, reinforce the notion I have repeatedly rejected throughout this dissertation: that, in the last analysis, the second world war, the American "liberation" of the Philippines, and, in a more general sense, the triumph

of democracy against a defeated global fascism, was a step in the right direction toward actualizing democracy's radical potential, despite the fact that, as these characters' typological functions reveal (and especially Shigura's and Deogracias'), everything the war stood for among those with power would be wiped out by this radical politics. What we need to do is figure out how this evacuation of meaning, this creation of a new and negating language, can refuse being refilled by such a hierarchization of time qua meaning, of meaning qua time.

C. A Constellation of Traitors: Baroque Irony

Alma is our fourth main character, and she is the cipher of any delimitable meaning. She is also the novel's primary site of focalization. She affects every character, including the three I have just described. And as we will see, she is the actualization of the baroque mode and is the instigator of the reader-subject's *praxis*.

Alma begins the novel: its prologue is an hallucination of hers, which takes place before she is found by Amoran and Hidalgo, and it depicts the following event: the death of a Filipino boy with whom she had been infatuated. The hallucination transforms, in advance, four of the novel's characters and combines them, turning them into figures whom Alma imagines as co-participants in some small adventure: to travel, on a boat, beyond Asia and into the seas of the world. First, there is a "boy," first shown eating flowers, and who recalls Alma's erstwhile crush, who sold flowers before being shot by a Japanese soldier, but who in the hallucination is a blue-eyed American, much like Captain Jonas Winters. Second, there is "Quasimoto," a Japanese soldier on the run whom Alma and the boy encounter and who eventually joins them in their travels, who recalls both Major Shigura (for reasons I will shortly describe) and Amoran (the latter described later

on in the novel as having a hunchback). Moreover, the hallucination is punctuated with the distant sounds of a guitar; throughout the novel, Amoran himself is oftentimes introduced, his presence in the scene evoked, by the sound of a guitar (which he keeps strapped to his body).

That the novel should begin in such a way, with characters of different national and political allegiances cooperating to sail the seas and, as the reader eventually realizes, are the result of a merger between four characters that play a large part in the kind of typology that Alma embodies, blurs the line, as the narrative says, between "reality" and "dream:" "*They navigated from day to daydream, unwilling to linger in one place.*"[29] Such an unwillingness to adhere to the either side of the boundary between clarity and hallucination, however, does not exempt this navigation from having any concrete correlate: as the novel shows, each hallucinatory figure has as its counterpart a figure. But these figures arise *post-hallucination*: the figures the reader eventually encounters are actually *pre-figurations of the hallucination that begins the narrative proper*. Why is this significant? Because, by being framed by Alma's thought, her dreams, her imagination, the novel becomes imbued with a *futurality*, in the sense that I gave to it in Chapter 3: as the absolute temporal negativity of the present. The narrative, by being pre-figured by a hallucination that takes place before every event, because Alma thinks characters who (with the exception of the murdered boy with whom Alma was in love) have yet to exist, becomes saturated with her thought. The hallucinatory prologue is as much a delirious fabrication as it is a mangled form of foresight. *The thought that contours the narrative is Alma's through and through*. What the reader does when he or she reads is plunge into a world she has already imagined.

[29] *ibid*, 16.

What kind of a world is this? It is a world marked by flight, by *treason*. This is how treason is defined in the prologue, revealed in a dialogue between Alma and Quasimoto:

> *"I have committed treason," he sighed, never neglecting to cast a troubled glance at the clouds whenever he resorted to this throat-catching word that weighed most on his mind.*
>
> *"What is treason?" asked the girl.*
>
> *"Nothing but the width of the universe," groaned Quasimoto. "Nothing but the wrath of man."*
>
> *"How lovely it is," Alma raved, swaying to Quasimoto's litany.*
>
> *"*Hai*," agreed Quasimoto, "indeed . . ."*
>
> *"How lonely it is."*
>
> *"It is . . ."*[30]

Recall Shigura's traitorous dreams of a world beyond nations, States, democracies, and law, of a world that has superceded every present value, of a world in which a new language that is the absolute negativity of the present is born. That the prologue unites three figures from countries at war with each other is enough to signal a certain amount of treason. What is more important, however, is the desire that Alma has for it; it is both lovely and lonely to her, the object of desire that also *abolishes any notion of togetherness and community*. Treason is lonely because to be a traitor—not a traitor to a country, to a cause, to anything in particular, but a traitor pure and simple, which is what Quasimoto is—is to stand against every conceivable value that upholds allegiances and established ideas.

And alone is what Alma becomes by the end of the prologue: after being captured by a group of six unnamed men (one of whom, however, can be seen as a

[30] *ibid*.

pre-figuration of Hidalgo), the boy and Quasimoto are killed. Alma takes her revenge by grabbing a rifle, killing all but one. She is shown floating on a raft, having dined on bananas, with the body of Quasimoto in her lap: "*now the infanta of the forest has eaten and there nothing left to guard and no history on earth could write the memory nor light this night without gods. Down the river the man (the lone brave lover)* [the only survivor of Alma's revenge, who chases after her along the banks of the river upon which she floats, enamored by her] *saw her floating on a piece of house in a dream of life, her hair as long as sunrise. And she also wept, she also sang 'O Quasimoto-San, I long for your treason. . . .'*"[31] Thus begins the narrative.

Throughout, Alma, for the most part, stands alone. What effect does this prologue have on the narrative? As we saw in my description of Hidalgo's, Shigura's, and Deogracias' typologies, the novel is replete with attempts at evacuating meaning from concepts in the name of actualizing some future peace, failed attempts that result in nothing more than a reintroduction of meanings that recapitulate those hierarchies that each character is attempting to rebel against by positing a deterministic model of time and history. These hierarchies delimit a particular identity to which this future peace belongs: for Hidalgo, it was an identity sublimated to a condition of Spanish-ness; for Shigura, it was a pan-Asianism at the helm of which is a pure Japanese (and thus Asian) ethnicity; for Deogracias, it was a notion of Filipino-ness linked to the *tao*. The latter two, especially, posit the second world war as a necessary step towards actualizing their respective utopias, as the event that would accelerate the violence between, for Shigura, nations, and, for Deogracias, the Philippines' classes. These delimitations, however, are belied by what the prologue provides: *irony*. The novel, by starting out with Alma's desire

[31] *ibid*, 21.

for treason, by pre-figuring the majority of the main characters in an hallucinatory version of unity, posits the existence of another idea that lies beside and against the delimitations presented in the narrative proper: *the idea of the traitorous assembly of figures in the name of rebelling against history, memory, language, and gods*. Alma's longing for treason drifts, like her raft, throughout the entire narrative as the principle that stands against the war, against nations and States, against every principle fought for—fascism, Empire, democracy.

The irony makes its way into every novelistic event as the alternative meaning *that is not represented*: it is what is presented by the prologue and what insinuates itself throughout. The result is that Hidalgo Hispanophilia, Shigura's "neo-Nipponese rising sun," and Deogracias' "exploitation of the metaphor" in the name of the tabernacle of the Filipino are all ironized: they are the objects *refracted*, emanating the idea of their delimitations' *abolition* through treason, through the destruction of hierarchies, laws, rules, and values. The object represented, in other words, *disappears*; what takes its place is the *object-less* idea of treason. Recall, in my discussion of Deleuze, that the baroque mode posits not the object, but the objectile, the thing perceived from the standpoint of an hallucination. The irony involved in disappearing the objects of the narrative is thus a *baroque irony*, resulting from both a preliminary hallucination and the precipitation of a *non-represented* idea: non-hierarchical unity, the traitorous adventure of the boy, Alma, and Quasimoto.

What the reader perceives are not the divisions between nations, identities, flags, and ideas, *but potential unities*, the traitorous unities for which Alma longs. As the non-represented object, or objectile, this treason plunges the reader into the condition of the superject—that is, the effect of the perception (as Deleuze called it), *which, in this case, is nothing less than the effect of the reader's encounter with*

the literary work, or, what amounts to the same thing, the reading process itself. What happens is that the reader's thought on the narrative objectiles is a thought on the objectile as product of the reading process, such that the reader begins to think his or her own *effectedness* by (as being the effect of) the encounter with the literary work.

We have thus reached the incompossible dimensions of the novel. The traitorous world is a world against the world represented in the novel. Inasmuch as this incompossibility is a function of thought, the question of the reader's inseparability from incompossibility, or the subject as incompossibility, is actualized. The reader's encounter with the novel produces the reader-subject when he or she thinks the novel qua the baroque mode and sees beyond the representation of the war and grasps the idea of a radical treason. This thought places the reader in touch with the idea of the reading process *as* the process by which absolute negativity—that treason of Shigura's—becomes thinkable. This absolute negativity *is* the incompossible world that the reader-subject thinks, or in other words, *is* the reader-subject's thought qua the work of literature. And inasmuch as this reader thinks incompossibility, he or she also becomes a subject—*by thinking the separation from the world from itself and, in the process, thinking on the side of the world that cannot be tolerated and represented by the world given by the novel.*

D. "A Hundred Separate Places:" The World of Treason

But why exactly is this reader a *subject*, i.e. militant? Because he or she initiates the *praxis* enabled by the thought on this incompossibility. *Praxis*, to recall our discussion of Rancière and Jauss, is the reader's ability to think the reconstitution of the world according to the principle of equality, of literature's redistribution of the sensible beyond the delimitations imposed upon the social

order by capitalism. The primary means for literary *praxis*, as we saw, is its abolition of communication, and that this abolition initiates in its turn the "disincorporation" of both knowledge and being. This has the effect of making visible—*but without representing*—a new mode of life, a new kind of community that, by destroying the composition of capital's social order, is *inefficient* and *non-productive*, thus calling to mind the *idea* of *a new mode of production* altogether. This links literary *praxis* with the thought on concrete *work*.

But for the Lovers expresses, through baroque irony, this incompossible world as *the world that did not fall into the trap of positing the binary between fascism and democracy, a binary that, as we have been discussing throughout this dissertation, makes it possible to salvage democracy's liberatory potential, one that has, because of Empire's hegemonic power, been corrupted*. Alma's prologue, by introducing what can be called the baroque ironic mode, repudiates democracy itself: *treason names the rebellion against those sacred values that maintain democracy's hold on radical politics*. There is nothing more treasonous than expressing the idea, especially in a Filipino novel, that a Japanese fascist is redeemable, much less an essential element to the cause of freedom, even an hallucinatory one. This is a community of traitors. This is a community that does not only not believe that the American return could have ever named a true liberation; it also believes that democracy, the legacy it has left and the violent capitalist path it has traced throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, itself can do nothing but name Empire itself.

What kind of a community is nameable, then? The incompossible world is *named by the force of attribution*. Since it designates absolute negativity, the incompossible world, produced by literary *praxis*, is drawn from out of its abyss by the reader-subject's emergence, i.e. by *attribution*. The common named is still

Filipino: the reader-subject *as* Filipino becomes Filipino by virtue of his or her recognition of the significance of thinking, *qua the Philippines*, past the identitarianism that could potentially plague the thought on a diasporic political subject. Like Alma's raft, this subject drifts throughout the world seeking freedom; but it is still Filipino inasmuch as this subject takes upon itself the project of eroding the foundations of its very being. This being is the being dominated by the axiomatic—the alignment of the Filipino with capital, with Empire, with the State, with neoliberal democracy. But a becoming-Filipino, whose political destiny is that of the constellational subject, and vice versa, is the name of an uprising against the axiomatization, which, by "using" *the* primary term of the axiomatic field—the Filipino—also discloses the existence of some originary point upon which the axiomatic, through a continual negation, is constituted. *The becoming-Filipino, in other words, names the incompossible world that militates against neoliberal democracy—the "other" Filipino that is banned by the axiomatic Filipino. This is the Filipino that Alma calls to mind, the Filipino producible when the reader thinks the baroque irony of the novel.*

Moreover, because incompossibility requires the subject's self-differentiation into subject and object, superject and objectile, the following happens: when a becoming-Filipino occurs, this means that what the reader-subject encounters is the idea of his or her *inclusion* in the world of treason, *a thought that thinks itself in the process of becoming, of engaging the act of treason*. This accomplishes what I defined as thought's doubling: *the thought on the thought of the function of militancy*. *To think this thought is to think one's subject-hood, and since subject-hood is incompossibility, to think this thought is to think one's incompossibility*. The reading process initiated in *But for the Lovers* is thus the initiator of a thought on the subject's present as being rife with the potential for the

incompossible, for the eruption of absolute negativity, of the destruction of axiomatization.

At the end of the novel, as Tondo burns, torched by the Japanese while fleeing from the American invasion, the city is overrun by looting Filipinos: "Manila appeared to be invaded by civilians."[32] In the chaos, amid the fire, Alma rides on Amoran's back, both of them looking for shelter. They are attacked by other Filipinos, and retaliate by scratching and biting; they respond by backhanding and punching her, choking her from behind. This is a surprising scene. Prior to that, she has been held, because of her enigmatic beauty, in virtual reverence by everyone she meets: when found malnourished after a third suicide attempt (before being found by Hidalgo and Amoran), she is used, alternately, by an entire community as an example of Japan's cruelty, as the indication that the government should reform its agrarian policies.[33] After she kisses Captain Johnny on the cheek during one of the guerillas' propagandistic processions, he becomes obsessed with her, falling deathly ill, haunted by her memory.[34] And Shigura himself tracks her every movement, following her throughout Manila on his white horse.[35] She passes through the novel generating meaning—or rather, she passes through and everyone creates meaning from her, driving everyone, almost literally, crazy. But in truth, she is a cipher, an abyss. She is the absolute negation, as the desirer of treason, of all values and meaning. It is only in the state of complete panic, when the city becomes invaded by its own citizens, when a virtual uprising occurs, that she ceases to be the bearer of meaning and simply becomes one of the many Filipinos scrambling and fighting for their lives.

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[32] *ibid*, 306.
[33] *ibid*, 53.
[34] *ibid*, 148 – 9.
[35] *ibid*, *passim*.

This is a riot, however, and she is mourning it. After finding shelter in a pagoda, she begins to pray, cursing and blaming Hidalgo (the only character who sought to force meaning upon her, rather than deriving it *from* her) "and the universe of man with a voice softer than sleep, louder than nightmare before the boy [Amoran] who could not lock his ears, only shut his eyes as she mourned to a burning city."[36] Is this mourning imbued with the same irony as the rest of the novel? Yes. If everyone's attempts at extracting meaning from her are indeed ironic, which means that they express, as against treason, the attempt to delimit her as an exploitable metaphor (like Winters), then her equalization during the burning of Tondo can mean only one thing: that the universe of man that she lashes out against is a universe of warfare and States, that she herself has been *included* in the war and given meaning *as a Filipino who has been reduced to salvaging the scraps of Empire for livelihood—to what the Japanese have left behind, to what the Americans are bombarding*. What she mourns is the universe of man itself, of a humanity defined by its continual laying of seige in the name of States, in the name of putative freedoms, of capital, of expansion, of democracy. If she does not have the capability to confound those who surround her, it is only because the end of the second world war signaled not the apocalypse of values, but the *saturation* of them: *everything became an object for the Occupation's cruelty, everything became a target for democratic liberation*. This saturation of value is what Alma remains treasonous towards: the Filipino she names is beyond the value of this politics. It names the potential for exceeding humanity, one freed from hierarchies and representation. It names a subject whose autonomy arises by thinking the absolute negativity of axiomatization.

[36] *ibid*, 307.

If there is something to be learned from *But for the Lovers*, then it is that, "[p]erhaps in a hundred separate places . . . revolution—or at the very least, a collective rage—was the only answer."[37] This is a rage born not from the seige of Empire, when the Filipino is left to fight each other for the spoils of warfare; it is a rage that explodes in an expression of autonomy against order, against identity, in the name of a multilateral constitution of a diasporic militant subject, one that bursts like a constellation, one region after the other or all at once, lighting up the earth in one spot and then another, becoming here and there in spite of the State, in spite of capital, in spite of democracy, a vast world composed of traitors.

[37] *ibid*, 263.

CONCLUSION
IN THE NAME OF SILENCE

Of course what I have been describing for the last three chapters remains open to chance. The production of a political subject qua literature-as-thought is always a potentiality. The risk taken in literature is precisely what gives it its ability to induce a becoming-Filipino: its abolition of communication, the burial, as *But for the Lovers* shows, of the idea of militancy beneath a heap of language, under a pile of characters and events given in the novel's representative apparatus. As I mentioned in the Introduction, literature is a variable operator of attribution. This, in a way, drives a wedge into this dissertation—the first part, i.e. the first three chapters, acting as the preliminary investigations to a further theoretical elaboration of the characteristics of a diasporic militant Filipino subject, and the second part, i.e. the last three chapters, with the fourth chapter acting as the bridge, the description of how one variable operator, literature, is capable of potentially inducing attribution.

This mode of organization, I hope, has shown, by demonstration, the need to disavow ourselves from posing the question of what comes first: the idea of the constellational diaspora, or its encounter in literature, or any other variable operator, for that matter. Contrary to such a false dichotomy, my aim has been to demonstrate that they are inseperable, that the thought on the constellational diaspora is not something that one brings to literature, nor is it something that arises from out of literature as a special domain of thought, but rather that *literature is itself a form of thought equal to any other, that the reading process can function as a way of thinking that, in the characteristics and mannerisms, so to speak, specific*

to this enterprise, can operate the thought on a non-hierarchical diasporic politics. This is what I mean when I call literature literature-as-thought. As against the tendencies of Iser, for instance, who, in the phenomenological tradition, submits literature to the special conditions of the Husserlian *epoché*, I think that literature is actually *one mode of thought into which one passes*, *yet another moment in many others, where a variety of operators exist, in which the thought on attribution and a true Filipino militancy occurs*. If anything, what I have been after all along is to demonstrate how it is possible to think this militancy, qua the concept of absolute negativity, in a variety of reading "situations:" from sets of theoretical works (Laclau and Mouffe, Badiou, Althusser, Marx, Negri, Iser, Jauss, Rancière, Deleuze), to historical and critical analyses and claims (San Juan, Allen, the CPP-Maoist), and of course to literature and literary theory (Moretti, José, Lukács, Frye, Bulosan, Nolledo).

Where does that leave us? If indeed a concept that makes militancy thinkable can be found in that of treason, this means that thinking treason as a consistent *praxis* entails disavowing the claims, in today's military-politico climate, of the war on terror. If the name Filipino serves to designate the treason against the doctrines of the present, then it is a precarious endeavor indeed. It means disavowing every claim and every definition implied in the war on terror, from the name "terrorism" itself to that which defends society from it: democracy. Being a traitor means being militant because it names that subject that not only questions, but posits true radical alternatives to the concepts of resistance, justice, liberation, and, what is more, society, which, increasingly, has come to be identified with capitalism and American-enforced democracy. It means positing a new topology of liberatory action, of creating new spaces for revolution and self-constitution. Because it has become impossible to think democracy without also recuperating, in

some way the axiomatics of Empire and capital, of the police and the State, it has come time to replace it with a new idea, perhaps with a new notion of democracy not beholden to the consensus' claims of equality, whether social, political, or economic, which involves, then, even rejecting the idea of a radical democracy that merely fights for what the present declares possible.

And what is this new idea? For the Filipino diaspora, the question is vexing. I chose World War II as my historical point of inquiry strategically: all too often, the trap of democracy rears itself when the problem of America's liberation is tackled by the Left. The binary between fascism and democracy having been criticized, it is not difficult to move on to the binary between terrorism and democracy: if the former is being used by the defenders of Empire and capital to axiomatically generate Filipinos across the world, where OCWs, and especially the domestic workers, become the new heroes and heroines of the Philippine State, and when this act of support becomes a matter of national pride and an issue of the Philippines' progress towards an economically secure future; when this is contingent upon the influx of capital from TNCs, the loans of the IMF, and World Bank projects; when the flow of capital ensures the Philippines' integration into a neoliberal global economy; when this economy can survive only when States are democratically-secured from the threats against terrorism, anti-democratic sentiment, and, what amounts to the same thing, anti-Americanism; when anyone who challenges the alignment of freedom, security, justice, progress, democracy, Empire, capital, and America are automatically linked to the world of the hijackers who were able to transform those jetliners into weapons to smash them into the World Trade Center—if indeed this marks the topology of the current world order, then those who seek to rescue democracy from its imperial corruptors seem doomed

to failure. They can do nothing but imagine a way to work, as the saying does, "within the system," a system that remains obstinate to the subtleties *of language*.

Absolute negativity, the absolute negativity of the constellational Filipino diaspora, is my contribution to thinking "outside" and imagining otherwise.

It:

a. introduces the future into the present;

b. remains heretical to the past;

c. aims at thinking non-hierarchically;

d. creates the possibility of thinking of militancy as a discreet procedure that nonetheless has ramifications in the vast field of the diaspora's reach; and

e. conceptualizes thought as the primary means for *praxis*, such that thinking absolute negativity in *every situation*, which demands the recognition of the variable operators of every encounter (with ideas, with concrete events), becomes the instigator of true militant activity.

Because the topology of the constellational diaspora, as the topology of absolute negativity for a militant Filipino diaspora, is based upon thought, it has an advantage over the axiomatics of the current order. If the mainstream Left still loves a democracy that cannot escape its capitalist and imperial besiegers, it is confined to what is essentially a semantic debate: democracy means this, not that, and it involves doing this, not that. The defenders of the democratic principle, no matter how radical they are, are still trapped in the logic of *communication*. But we have arrived at a point where it is pointless to argue, where we seek to simply transform things from the standpoint of the kind of hegemonic disagreement of Laclau and Mouffe's "socialist strategy."

Absolute negativity demands otherwise. *Its discretion is its strategy, and it involves being distant from the current world, it means operating militancy in small units of self-constitution*. Instead of passing *through* Empire, the State, and capital, instead of talking to them, it posits *silence* as its accomplice; because it is non-delimitable even to itself, because self-constitution is contingent upon the region in which the axiomatic produces the Filipino as a friend to power, it posits multiply incompossible worlds. *It is the language and* praxis *that give rise to militancy in every situation, a language and* praxis*, however, that remain, because of their discretion, incomprehensible to power*. Absolute negativity always comes as a surprise, like an ambush.

Admittedly, this is all very poetic; I have not quite provided the concrete examples of, for instance, a type of locally-based organization of, say, domestic workers, seamen, or service workers in the oil fields of the Middle East. Regrettably, I have left that to a future project. What I have done in this dissertation is much more humble and, perhaps ironically, risky: to present the theoretical foundations for this future project, to conceptualize what it means to posit absolute negativity and a militant Filipino diasporic subject. I say risky because, of course, the demands of theory are high, and quite often its reach barely extends beyond the imaginary walls of the academy, and my audience has been limited to those who care about Badiou, Althusser and Deleuze, and who can put up with the dense abstraction of the language I have been deploying. But perhaps this dissertation has been a practice in thought itself—to think, within a given situation, in the language of that situation, absolute negativity. The task now is to extend this thought, to manifest absolute negativity such that its poetry remains, it being a function of thought (abstraction is inevitable), but in a way that its confounding

silence ring loud as a call to action, a concretization of the militancy of becoming-Filipino.

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